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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

MUSLIM WOMEN AND WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS: ALLIES IN THE WAR OF IDEAS

by

Chris A. Wade

December 2007

Thesis Advisor:	Glenn E Robinson
Second Reader:	Heather S. Gregg

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MUSLIM WOMEN AND WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS:
ALLIES IN THE WAR OF IDEAS

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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This thesis will demonstrate that women and women's groups in the Muslim world could be a strong ally in reducing the influence and spread of Islamist ideologies. Women and women's organizations have proven that they are effective in resisting the impact of Islamism and have been able to role back some of its repressive policies as evidenced by the case studies of Iran, Algeria, and Afghanistan. Women and women's organizations or feminist groups are currently active in the Muslim world already and are a growing voice in the region. Therefore, it is of vital interest to the United States Government to engage these groups and women's interests as a means of challenging the spread of Islamist ideology and enlisting them in the war of ideas.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This thesis will examine Muslim women and women's groups to determine whether they could be a critical vulnerability in Islamist ideology and an asset to the United States in the Global War on Terror.

President Bush stated, while speaking at the fifth anniversary of September 11, "In the long term, we've got to defeat an ideology of hate with an ideology of hope."[1] Senator Joe Lieberman, chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, said that a war of ideas is needed to counter Islamic extremists. "Because this is a war, but it is ultimately a war against, and with, an ideology that is inimical to our own values of freedom and tolerance and diversity." In addition, the State Department lists three main elements of its strategy as:

> [1]Offer people throughout the world a positive vision of hope and opportunity that is rooted in America's belief in freedom, justice, opportunity and respect for all; Isolate and marginalize the violent extremists; confront their ideology of tyranny and hate. [2] Undermine their efforts to portray the west as in conflict with Islam by empowering mainstream voices and demonstrating respect for Muslim cultures and contributions; [3] Foster a sense of common interests and common values between Americans and people of different countries, cultures and faiths throughout the world.[2]

One often overlooked element that could be a part of this strategy, and an ally in the war of ideas, is women and women's organizations in the Muslim world. "The militant Islamist movements, which have proliferated across a wide variety of cultures and societies in North Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia, have propagated remarkably similar policies and doctrines with regard to

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[1] Fox News, Fox News Online, "Bush Visits 9/11 Sites to Mark 5-Year Anniversary," http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,213330,00.html?sPage=fnc.national/_911, accessed 16 October 2007.

[2] Michael J. Waller, Fighting the War of Ideas Like a Real War (Washington: The Institute of World Politics Press, 2007), 16.

gender issues."[3] Islamist groups have attempted, and to differing degrees have succeeded, in imposing their view of Islam. Iran, Egypt, Algeria, Sudan, and Afghanistan are just some of the more prominent examples in which Islamists gained a large following that subsequently resulted in widespread violence, with women bearing the brunt of that violence. Women in the Muslim world are the most affected by Islamist ideology, and it is this shared understanding of the threat that Islamism poses. This is the result of the symbolic nature of women in Muslim societies and the importance that Islamists place on separating themselves from those they view as evil. Women have come to dominate Islamists policies because the image of the veiled Muslim women is a powerful symbol of their faith. In countries in which the Islamists gained influence, women lost rights, such as the right to work outside the home, and the loss of legal recourse, especially in matters of family law. Additionally, women have born the brunt of violence, as demonstrated in Iran, Algeria, and Afghanistan, with the floggings and arrests of thousands of women for not being modestly dressed. These issues could be the basis for cooperation between the United States and women's groups in the Muslim world to counter and resist the spread if Islamism.

This thesis will demonstrate that women and women's groups in the Muslim world could be a strong ally in reducing the influence and spread of Islamist ideologies. Women and women's organizations are active in the Muslim world already and are a growing voice in the region. It is of vital interest to the United States to engage these groups and women's interests as a means of resisting the domination and continued spread of Islamist ideology. Engagement options include working with these groups, but more probable — due to the current poor perception of the U.S. in the Muslim world — the U.S. should work indirectly through other organizations and programs to reach out to Muslim women. The U.S. must open an active dialogue with these women and organizations to listen to their issues and build a shared understanding of the

[3] Janet Afary, "The War Against Feminism in the Name of the Almighty: Making Sense of Gender and Muslim Fundamentalism," (Women Living Under Muslim Laws, Dossier 21, September 1998), 1.

threat that Islamism brings. In addition, the U.S. can use its diplomatic, informational, and economic assets, and considerable influence to have an impact at the root level of Islamism.

Drawing on social movement theory, this thesis begins by constructing an analytical framework for investigating Islamist and feminist movements in the Muslim world. The thesis then examines three case studies, Iran, Algeria, and Afghanistan, to determine the conditions under which women's movements began, how they resourced themselves, and how they framed their arguments against Islamism.

The "women question" of Islam and the accompanying discourse of feminism in response to Islamist ideology has great potential for the United States as a means of working towards a better understanding of our mutual interests, and for resisting the influence and spread of Islamist ideology.

This thesis finds that women and women's groups in the Muslim world could be a strong ally in reducing the influence and spread of Islamist ideologies. Women and women's organizations have proven that they are effective in resisting the impact of Islamism and have been able to reverse some of its repressive policies. Women and women's organizations or feminist groups are already active in the Muslim world and are a growing voice in the region; based on this point of agreement, and work that is already being done, the U.S. can build alliances as a bulwark against Islamism.

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II. ISLAMISM

A. FUNDAMENTALISM AND WOMEN

The "women question" has once again come to the forefront as a major issue in determining the course of Islam in today's world. This is nothing new to the Muslim world as "the 'women question' presents the most consistent point of contention between traditional and modern society, and one that continually emerges despite attempts to avoid or shelve the issue. Both Islamists, and Arab nationalists more specifically, have engaged the issue of women's role and status throughout their history."[4] One scholar notes, "One of the most striking features of Islamist movements throughout the Arab world is their preoccupation with the 'women question.'" The rights of women and the roles they play are central to the Islamists' agenda.[5] Today, the "women question" is at the crux of the conflict between the Islamists and the greater public sphere of the Muslim world.

This chapter will examine and discuss fundamentalism, Islamic fundamentalism, Islamism, and leading Islamist thinkers' ideologies. Specifically, this chapter will look at each of these with respect to their ideas about women. Fundamentalism, Islamic fundamentalism, and Islamism are all important ideologies that are at the heart of the war of ideas. It is this fundamental ideology that the United States should recognize and seek to counter by working independently, as well as working with and through women, and women's organizations that are currently at risk or fighting Islamism.

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[4] Michelle Browers, "The Centrality and Marginalization of Women in the Political Discourse of Arab Nationalists and Islamist," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies,* Vol. 2, No. 2, Spring, (2006): 10.

[5] Lisa Taraki, "Islam is the Solution: Jordanian Islamists and the Dilemma of the Modern Woman," *British Journal of Sociology,* Vol. 46, No. 4 (1995): 643.

1. Fundamentalism

Fundamentalism was initially used to describe

> a movement in American Protestantism that arose in the early part of the 20th century in reaction to modernism and that stresses the infallibility of the Bible not only in matters of faith and morals but also as a literal historical record, holding as essential to Christian faith belief in such doctrines as the creation of the world, the virgin birth, physical resurrection, atonement by the sacrificial death of Christ, and the Second Coming.[6]

This term has taken on new meaning with regard to Islam, specifically in reference to the current radical Islamic movements that got their start with the Arab nationalists' defeat during the Six Day War with Israel, and then gained momentum with the Iranian Revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.[7]

Almond, Appleby, and Sivan describe in *Strong Religion*, the basic ideological and organizational characteristics that make up fundamentalist movements. The authors break these down into five ideological and four organizational characteristics. The first of the ideological characteristics is that fundamentalism is, at heart, reactive. It is a reaction "in defense against the processes and consequences of secularization and modernization that have penetrated the larger religious community."[8] The reaction is a "militant effort to counteract this trend."[9] Second, fundamentalism is selective. Fundamentalist groups focus on aspects of their traditions that separate them or identify them as being different. This is of particular importance when considering the role of women and how easily this can be used as a marker of identity. Third, fundamentalist groups embrace a "moral manichaeanism" or an extreme view of

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[6] Dictionary: http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/Fundamentalism, cited 2 September 2007.

[7] Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *Islam, Gender, and Social Change*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck and John Esposito (New York, Oxford University Press, 1998) 5.

[8] Gabriel A. Almond and Emmanuel Sivan, *Strong Religion*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2003), 93.

[9] Ibid.

good and evil where there is no middle ground.[10] This trait ties closely to the fourth characteristic of absolutism, in which the fundamentalists believe they are completely correct and all others wrong. The fifth characteristic is millennialism or messianism, which is a belief in the end of days, characterized by trials and tribulations, and culminates in a judgment day, at which time the "true believers" will be rewarded, and that this will be ushered in by the Messiah, the Savior, or the Hidden Imam.[11]

Almond's four organizational characteristics of fundamentalist groups are first, that the groups are made up of an elect or chosen membership. Second, "there are sharp boundaries between the saved and the sinful."[12] Third is that these organizations are authoritarian in their organization, usually with one central charismatic leader. In addition, these groups are usually characterized by a voluntary membership. Almond points out that this structure is fragile since there can be little to no dissension, and if it does occur, it usually results in fragmentation, with the dissenters either forming another group or being absorbed back into the mainstream. And fourth, the group establishes strict behavioral requirements for its members. A concept central to this thesis is how these strict behavioral codes effect women and how Muslim women react to these codes, especially when they are not members of the fundamentalist group but are forced to live by its codes.

Not all of these characteristics are essential for defining a group as fundamentalist, but they are found in many fundamentalist organizations. Of these characteristics, the reactive nature of fundamentalist, the moral Manichaeanism that claims the group's views are correct and that all others are wrong, and the strict behavioral requirements that characterize fundamentalist movements are what most often create conflict.

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[10] Almond, 95.

[11] Ibid., 97.

[12] Ibid., 98.

2. Islamic Fundamentalism

Lily Kakiyah Munir describes four basic tenets that Islamic fundamentalist groups share that are closely tied with Almond's analysis. These are, first, a strict interpretation of the Qur'an; second, they refuse to consider any other points of view or theologies (pluralism); third, "fundamentalists monopolize the truth of religious interpretation" and "they claim that they are the sole holder of the 'truth' and that their reading of the religious texts are final and unchallengeable"; and fourth, Islamic fundamentalists always have the traits of "fanaticism, exclusiveness, intolerance, radicalism, and militarism."[13] The third point is of particular interest when paired with the Islamic principle of *taqfir* – that of calling someone an infidel (*kafir*). Fundamentalists are then able to use this principle to accuse any opponent, or those with differing ideals, as a *kafir* or of not being Muslim. History is full of "liberal thinkers and scholars in the Islamic world that have been exiled or even punished to death" as a result of being labeled a *kafir*.[14] This, in part, may be one explanation for why some Muslims are not vocal about disagreeing with the fundamentalists.

Haideh Moghissi examines Islamic fundamentalism further and highlights three important considerations. First is the focus on an idealized past "that can be retrieved by the reformation of society… All Islamic fundamentalist movements share the view that the subjugation and subordination of Islamic societies are due to their deviation from "true" and authentic Islam.[15] To correct this, the fundamentalists work toward purifying Islamic societies and modeling them after their interpretation of the Qur'an and the Sunna, such that Islamic fundamentalists are anti-modern.

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[13] Lily Zakiyah Munir, "Islamic Fundamentalism and its Impact on Women" (paper presented at the Association of Asian Studies (AAS) Forum conducted at the Hilton Hotel, New York, March 2003), 2–3.

[14] Munir, 9.

[15] Moghissi, 69.

Second, Moghissi describes Islamic fundamentalism as being anti-democratic. This is due to the basic fundamentalist principle of being exclusionary from other religious groups. They believe that they are right and that all others are wrong. This even applies to other Muslims and interpretations of Islam.

The third characteristic of Islamic Fundamentalism, according to Moghissi, is that they are anti-feminist. This is because the fundamentalists feel threatened by changes to gender relations; they prefer women to occupy the same roles they did in pre-modern times. This refers back to the fundamentalist idealized past and how they envision and interpret the Qur'an, and the Sunna, during the time of the prophet and the "Golden Age of Islam" under the rule of the first four Rightly Guided Caliphs. These characteristics are evident in the teachings of Islamist and Islamic fundamentalist ideology as well as the beliefs and practices of Islamic fundamentalist groups.

3. Islamism

Islamism is a broad term that generally refers to Islamic activists that are seeking the creation of an Islamic state, usually through political means. This encompasses three broad categories according to Haidah Mogissi.[16] The first consists of the apolitical idealists that envision an Islamic state, but do nothing more than write or teach about what one might be like – this is made up of individuals such as clerics or jurists. The second group consists of the Islamist liberal reformers who seek an Islamic state through legitimate political action and social reform to bring about a true Islamic state ruled by the principles of Shari'a law. Muhammad Abduh and Mehdi Bazargan's Freedom Movement are some examples of this type of political reformist teaching and organization.

Dr. Jeffrey Bale uses the term Islamism to describe the far radical right of Political Islam. Bale distinguishes between some definitions of Islamism that are

[16] Haideh Mogissi, 66.

concerned with any political movement or ideology that promotes or strives for an Islamic state. Political Islam includes Islamic Socialism, Islamic Liberalism, Moderate/Reformist Islam, and Islamism – all of which promote and work toward an Islamic state. The first three, Islamic Socialism, Liberalism, and Reformism are all reconcilers in that they do not view Islam and the West as being completely at odds. Instead, they attempt to reconcile Western and Islamic principles. Islamism on the other hand, completely rejects anything that the West may have to offer. So, according to Bale, Islamism is even more militant and aggressive in its ideology toward the rest of the world:

> The principal ideological characteristics of Islamism in all its forms are a radical rejection of Western Secular values, an intrinsic resistance to Western political, economic, social, and cultural influence over the Muslim world, an extreme hostility towards less committed and militant Muslims, and an affirmation of the importance of creating a truly Islamic state modeled on the strictest tenants of *shari'a*, and the exemplary behavior of Muhammed himself, his most loyal companions (both the original Meccan 'emigres' (*muhajirun*) and their Medinan 'supporters' (*ansar*), and their devout immediate successors, who are collectively known as the 'virtuous forefathers' (*al-salaf al-salihin*) of the faith.[17]

Most scholars and writers on the subject use the term Islamism to describe the current activist movement in the Muslim world. In addition, Islamists reference many of the same Islamist ideologues that have written extensively on what they believe to be the proper role of Islam in the world. This thesis will also use the term Islamism and Islamist to reference and describe this ideology and how it has and is impacting the world today.

4. Islamist Ideologues

Current Islamist groups reference many of the same Islamic thinkers as a source or basis for their ideology. Hasan al-Bana, an Egyptian ideologue and founder of the Muslim Brotherhood who wrote in the 1920's and 1930's, declared

[17] Jeffrey M. Bale, "Islamism" in Richard F. Pilch and Raymond A. Zilinkas, *Encyclopedia of Bioterrorism Defense* (Hoboken, N.J., 2005), 297.

that a "women's place is the home, and their primary roles are mother, wife, and housekeeper; he [al-Bana] prohibits social mixing between men and women."[18] Most of al-Bana's writing addressed economic, political, social, and moral issues as they pertain to Islam; he wrote only one essay on women. His importance as the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, however, gave this article extra importance.

Another important ideologue is Abu al-'Ala Mawdudi, who formed the political party Jamaati al Islami in Pakistan and wrote on the nature of an Islamic state. Mawdudi wrote extensively on the subject of women in Islam, publishing two books on the topic and several articles. Mawdudi espoused maintaining the honor and chastity of women, for which women must be kept housebound and in *purdah* – the seclusion of women from the sight of men or strangers – practiced by some Muslims and Hindus.

One of the most prominent Islamist ideologues at the heart of current Islamism is Sayyid Qutb. Sayyid Qutb is the modern author most frequently referenced by current Jihadist groups, and his ideas and interpretation of the Qur'an have been a guiding force for the Islamists.[19] Sayyid Qutb insisted that "modern Muslims had become so corrupt and spiritually bankrupt that they were ignorant and barbarous (*jahili*) as the polytheistic tribal societies in pre-Islamic Arabia, which meant that they had to be destroyed and replaced by a true Islamic society."[20] Central to Qutb's views on women is "the limitation of women's duties in society to that of wife and mother. This is not her sole role but her sole identity, for marriage in Islam is seen as a central institution around which is built society and civilization."[21] Qutb emphasized the role of family and marriage as

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[18] Munir, 3.

[19] William McCants and others, ed., "Militant Ideology Atlas" (Combating Terrorism Center, West Point, New York, Nov. 2006), 13.

[20] Bale, 297.

[21] Lumia Rustum Shehadeh, "Women in the Discourse of Sayyid Qutb," *Arab Studies Quarterly* (Summer 2000), found on line at http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2501/is_3_22/ai_66938022/print, accessed 8 August 2007.

being sacred to Islam. He urged in his writing that all manifestations of Westernism or secularism be purged from Islam. Women's roles in Islam were a potent symbol of this secularism that he railed against. "A woman fulfills her function by being a wife and mother, while that of a man is to be the undisputed authority, the breadwinner and the active member in public life."[22] Qutb continues by saying that a woman's "entire organic and physiological formation is shaped to procreate men and prepare them for both jihad and life."[23] "Thus, in a Muslim community, Qutb expounds that feminists or liberal demands for women's liberation become meaningless. Accorded rights and duties in conformity with her biological, mental, and emotional constitution, a woman is bound to be content in discharging a sacred task that is utterly an outward manifestation of her innermost being."[24]

Qutb addresses what he calls "the new vanguard" for his vision of the Islamic community and emphasizes that they should devote their attention to "the formation of the Muslim female so that she would raise a proper Muslim family. Unless these recommendations are adhered to, the construction of the Islamic community shall be delayed for a long time."[25] This type of teaching has led Islamist groups to make the "women question" of Islam one of their top priorities with dress, mobility, and the general status of women being one of their core theologies and political agendas.[26]

Qutb's influence can be seen in nearly all of the Islamist groups that are currently active. Though there may be some differences in their interpretation of what they envisage as an Islamic state or in their methods of creating that state, invariably women and their roles in Muslim society are at the top of their agenda and policies for the creation of that state. Groups such as al Qaeda, the Muslim

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[22] Youseff M. Choueiri, *Islamic Fundamentalism* (Twayne Publishers, Boston, Massachusetts 1990), 127.

[23] Choueiri, 128.

[24] Ibid, 129.

[25] Ibid.

Brotherhood, the Tanzim al-Jihad (Jihad Group), the Groupe Islamique Arme or Armed Islamic Group (GIA), al-Jihad al Islami (Islamic Jihad) – just to name a few – are groups that have embraced this far right radical ideology. It is this ideology that is recognized as a threat to U.S. interests as well as to the rights and freedoms of people throughout the world to live and choose the type of government and rules that they wish to live under.

B. CONCLUSION

These are the terms and some of the key ideologies of Islamism that are at the heart of what is occurring in the Muslim world and how it is adjusting to the pressures of modernization that are occurring around it and within it. This thesis will use the term Islamism and Islamists to describe these new radical Islamic movements. There are numerous terms that have been used to describe these groups or this ideology, but the core characteristics of Islamism that have been described here are at the heart of the discourse on the role of women in Islam. In addition, most of the literature from the academic community in the field of Islamic studies uses the term Islamism to describe this far right radical ideology.

Nearly all of the current Islamic Jihadist groups are based on this ideology; therefore understanding this ideology is critical in combating it as well as in reaching out to others who are fighting the same battle – Muslim women. To quote Lisa Taraki again, "One of the most striking features of Islamist movements throughout the Arab world is their preoccupation with the 'women question.'"[27] It is at the heart of the Islamists' agenda and is one of the most visible symbols of the ideology represented by the dress and visibility of women in the public sphere. It is this basic threat that unites women and women's groups in the Muslim world in resisting the Islamists' control, the spread of this ideology, and the violence that is always associated with it.

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[26] Kandiyoti, 9.

[27] Taraki, 643.

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III. FEMINISM IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

A. FEMINISM IN THE SHADOW OF ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM

"Islamists... most often have used women as markers of cultural authenticity or, alternately, the decadent and immorality (*jāhiliyya*) of the community."[28] In a study conducted by Marty Riesbrodt, he concludes, "…what fundamentalist cannot prevent in the way of structural transformation they attempt to impose symbolically."[29] It is clear that "the control of female sexuality looms large in the language employed by fundamentalists" and to a greater extent, experienced by women living under its sway.[30] "Feminist organizations from Algeria to Malaysia have warned that Islamist [Islamic fundamentalist] power-sharing would, in fact, reverse the educational and social gains of the post independence period, remove women from public life, and again restrict their roles solely to that of wife and mother."[31] In short, the issue of women's status has become one of the most significant identifiers of Islamic fundamentalist ideology.

This chapter will examine the Social Movement Theory (SMT) as it relates to feminism in the Muslim world and the effort to address the "woman question." SMT provides an effective tool for analyzing the dynamics that groups play in social action. The value of SMT is that it uses established comparative political theories and methodologies, such as rational choice, and structural, and cultural comparative frameworks that are useful in examining the dynamic environment in

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[28] Michaelle Browers, "The Centrality and Marginalization of Women in the Political Discourse of Arab Nationalists and Islamists," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies, Vol. 2, No. 2* (Spring 2006): 22.

[29] Malise Ruthven, Fundamentalism: A Very Short Introduction (New York, Oxford University Press, 2007), 65.

[30] Ibid, 64.

[31] John Esposito, Islam, Gender, and Social Change, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck and John Esposito (New York, Oxford University Press, 1998) xi.

which these movements take place.[32] Three key elements of SMT that will be used to analyze the cases are political opportunity, resource mobilization, and cultural framing.

In determining political opportunity, there are three main elements of analysis that must be answered.[33] First, is the government or leadership inclusive or exclusive toward the opposition or challenge? Second, what are the opportunities or constraints placed on the movement? And third, what change occurred that affected the group or movement, such as a change of leadership, policy, or legal changes? Analyzing these factors provides the context in which the group or movement operates.

Resource mobilization is the second key element of SMT. SMT analyzes the mobilizing structures that emerge and develop in support of a movement or group. This can be formal, such as a political party, professional association or a student union; or, these structures can be informal, such as a group of friends, or a study group. Resources also include time, interests, money, external support, and the political space or opportunity to even exist. "It is through these structures that movements recruit like-minded individuals, socialize new participants, overcome the free rider problem, and mobilize contention."[34]

The third important element of SMT is cultural framing. "[T]he goal of framing is to vilify or de-credential the opposition while validating and legitimating the goals and stated purpose of one's own group."[35] Framing provides identity, loyalty, and solidarity, and can help shape societal or cultural perceptions. One important consideration that SMT provides is that "culture is conceptualized as multilayered. First, every society has a variety of stories, symbols, and histories that make up something of a collective tool box." It is from this tool box that the

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[32] Maj Jenifer Chandler, USAF, "The Explanatory Value of Social Movement Theory," *Strategic Insights,* Vol. IV, Issue 5 (May 2005).

[33] Ibid.

[34] Glenn E. Robinson, "Hamas as Social Movement," in *Islamic Activism: a Social Movement Theory Approach* (Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, 2004), 116.

[35] Chandler.

feminist movement drawn its greatest strength. The important symbolism is that women inside the Muslim culture cannot be overlooked. It is this symbolism that the Muslim feminist movement in has used to challenge Islamic fundamentalism.

Other academics have used SMT to examine the growth of Islamism, such as the Nationalists' defeat in the 1967 war with Israel.[36] The use of SMT to analyze the growth of Islamism is useful because it is this movement and its success in gaining political power, and the subsequent policies in countries throughout the region, that has led to the growth of feminism in the Muslim world and provided some common points of comparison.

Feminism has experienced widespread growth in the Muslim world with numerous groups emerging in response to changes throughout the region. Specifically, liberal feminism and Islamic feminism are two such movements that have emerged in response to Islamic fundamentalist ideologies. These movements have grown out of the changes in the political opportunity structures: in some cases from the increases in access or freedom and in other instances, from the repression of their rights. Liberal feminism is concerned with the legal changes and has emerged with its own mobilizing structures and its own means of framing the "woman question." Islamic feminism seeks to redefine the understanding of the rights and roles of Muslim women from their own perspective, instead of what they see as the male-dominated interpretation of Islam's sacred texts and traditions. Islamic feminism is framing the issue in terms of what they feel is a patriarchic, misogynistic interpretation of Islam that deprives them of what they believe Islam really provides.

B. FEMINISM

There are numerous definitions of feminism. Margot Badran argues, "Feminisms are produced in particular places and are articulated in local

[36] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Introduction, Islamic Activism and Social Movement Theory," in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* (Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, 2004) 7.

terms."[37] This has led to feminism taking on its own form in the Muslim world. In general terms, feminism is the belief in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes and the movement organized around this belief, which is a typical definition of feminism.[38]

Most of the leading feminist thinkers that have emerged from the Muslim world have written extensively on the role that Islamic fundamentalist ideology has had on women in that region and have helped to frame the differences between the Islamic fundamentalists and the feminists. Haidah Mogissi, an Iranian born sociology and women's studies professor, expands on the basic principles of fundamentalism and describes Islamic fundamentalists as being anti-modern, anti-democracy, and anti-feminist as well as being utopian in nature and oriented in the past.[39] The myth, or utopian ideal, is rooted in the illusion that a return to idealized traditional, patriarchal relations is the solution to the current social, economic, and political problems. Fatima Mernissi, a Moroccan Sociologist, describes fundamentalism as an "assertion of identity in the face of rapid social changes threatening existing authority relations (especially between genders)," which makes women's rights a central part of the Islamists' agenda in terms of Islamization programs such as dress, mobility, and general status.[40] This pressure is at the social, political, and religious levels of Muslim societies. Socially, women are pressured by the view of what makes a woman a good Muslim due to the widespread control that Islamists have been able to assert. "Islamic groups demand a return to the pristine Islam of the first Muslim

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[37] Margot Badran, "Islamic Feminism: What's in a Name?" *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 17–23 January 2002, Issue No. 569.

[38] *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. [*Web Site*] http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/feminism (accessed: October 24, 2007).

[39] Haidah Moghissi, *Feminism and Islamic Feminism*, (Zed Books, London, 1999), 70.

[40] Deniz Kandiyoti, "Women, Islam and the State," *Middle East Report*, (November – December 1991), 9.

community in the seventh century Arabia, the establishment of an Islamic state, and implementation of Islamic laws as formulated by the classical jurists of those first centuries of Islam."[41]

More and more attention is being paid to feminism and its impact and potential impact in the Muslim world. Valentine Moghadam and Fatima Sadiqi propose that "the public sphere in a number of MENA countries is changing and civil society is becoming 'feminized' due to women's greater social participation, the proliferation of women's organizations, their involvement in or initiation of public debates and national dialogues, and their access to various forms of media."[42] Of specific importance is the belief that this new feminism is not modeled after Western feminism but is being based on the Muslim world's own culture and religious identity. The movement away from westernized feminism is partially due to the growth of Islamic fundamentalism, as well as needing a feminist ideology that is based on their socio-cultural foundations, not just the import of a Western idea. The result is that feminism has taken on its own form in the Muslim world. Feminism has inspired several types of social movements. The two most prominent and recognizable forms are Islamic feminism, which specifically studies the Qur'an and the Sunna from a women's point of view and offers its interpretations, and liberal feminism, which addresses the legal aspects of women in their respective countries. Both have similar goals and objectives that overlap each other in many ways. For this thesis, liberal feminism will address more of the secular effort to effect legal changes, while Islamic feminism will address the effort to change laws within Shari'a due to the inseparable nature of Shari'a with Islamic jurisprudence.

Within the framework of the Social Movement theory, two forms of feminism that are of importance and have taken on their own type of emphasis

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[41] Nora Murat, "Sisters in Islam: Advocacy for Change within the Religious Framework," Women Living Under Muslim Laws [*Web site*] http://www.wluml.org/english/pubs/pdf/wsf/17.pdf accessed 28 October 2007.

[42] Valentine Moghadam and Fatima Sadiqi, "Women's Activism and the Public Sphere," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Spring 2006), 1.

and activism, when examining the Muslim world, are liberal feminism and Islamic feminism. This is not to say that these are the only feminist movements; there are many other forms of feminism that are active in Muslim countries, often with overlapping ideologies. Liberal feminism and Islamic feminism are representative of these movements because they are clearly defined and visible, both in terms of action and in organizations that are involved in the support of their feminist ideology. In addition, these two movements reflect the socio-cultural differences that are present in the Muslim world that has led to the growth of feminism and women's groups in that region. But their real importance is that they are at the heart of the issue in regards to Islamism. Both of these movements frame their arguments and positions as a means of competing against what they view as a means of repression – the policies and ideology of the Islamists. Understanding liberal and Islamic feminism is therefore critical in creating policies that would enable the enlistment of Muslim organizations within MENA as a means of countering Islamism.

C. LIBERAL FEMINISM

Liberal feminism has its ideological basis in the equality of men and women. Liberal feminists believe that women should have the same opportunities politically, economically, and socially that are available to men. To accomplish these ideals, Liberal feminists attempt to change the laws that they view as affording or creating unequal rights or opportunities for women and by crafting new legislation. Ziba Mir-Hosseini, a feminist and anthropologist from Iran offers the following perspective of Liberal feminism in light of the 1979 Iranian Revolution:

> Like most Iranian women, I strongly supported the 1979 Revolution and believed in the Justice of Islam. But I soon found out that in an Islamic state that was and was committed to the application of Shari'a, the backbone of the Islamist project; I was a second class citizen. This brought me to the realization that the justice of Islam in modern times cannot be achieved without the 'modernization' and 'democratization' of its legal vision. For this, Islamic discourses

> and Islamists must come to terms with the issue of rights, especially those of women. The justice of Islam is no longer reflected in the laws that some Islamists are intent on enforcing in the name of Shari'a.[43]

In Muslim countries, this primarily takes the form of addressing national laws, particularly family law. Family law governs marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance laws. Nadia Hijab argues that in Arab nations that have constitutions, the nations provide for women's political rights in accordance with international laws and United Nations Conventions, but family laws "do not provide for equality between the sexes because they have been developed within the Islamic framework in all Arab countries."[44] She goes on to argue, "[M]ost family laws, as they currently stand, contradict the provisions of the constitutions and the labor laws that have been decreed."[45] Another example of liberal feminist type arguments is the issue of veiling. "For example, a dress code practiced in past centuries in certain communities is propagated as 'Islamic' and people are forced to adopt it as a symbol or their 'Islamic' identity."[46] These laws are being challenged across the Muslim World by liberal feminist organizations and others.

These are just a couple of the types of laws that liberal feminists are working to change. This effort has taken on several different forms; the first is on the national level, where liberal feminists are working to change the laws of their country. Liberal feminists are also working at the regional and international levels and are being assisted through the United Nations and various Non

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[43] Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "The Quest for Gender Justice: Emerging Feminist Voices in Islam," Islam 21, the Interantional Forum for Islamic Discussion, 5 July 2007. [*Web Site*] http://islam21.net/main/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=121&Itemid=39; accessed 24 October 2007.

[44] Nadia Hijab, "Islam, Social Change, and the Reality of Arab Women's Lives," in Islam, Gender, and Social Change, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddan and John Esposito (New York, Oxford University Press, 1998) 46.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Lily Zakiyah Munir, "Islamic Fundamentalism and Its Impact on Women" (paper presented at the Association of Asian Studies (AAS) Forum conducted at the Hilton Hotel, New York, March 2003), 3.

Governmental Organizations. For example, the UN has held regional meetings in preparation for the United Nations' World Conference on Women, which crafts goals and strategies to address women's rights in the region and by country to bring them in line with the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This convention, when ratified by a country, is a pledge to bring their laws in line with the Convention. This regional and international focus has helped women's groups to work together in the region. The sharing of information has helped to identify which laws reflect their Islamic heritage and which laws are based on pre-Islamic patriarchal tribal codes that need to be changed or reinterpreted to reflect the changes and realities of today's world. Some of the laws in question are mandatory veiling laws, women's right to work laws, and inheritance laws. One specific example that continues to be addressed on national, regional, and international levels is that of equating rape to adultery in Pakistan.[47] The law was enacted in 1979 by General Zia ul-Haq, the military ruler of Pakistan from 1977 to 1988. The law required the same burden of proof for rape as it did for adultery, which according to Shari'a requires four eyewitnesses. In 1981, the law was challenged in the federal Shari'a court and found to be un-Islamic, but was reinstated shortly thereafter due to political pressure. This law is still in effect, though it is being challenged by groups internal to Pakistan and other regional and international liberal feminist organizations.

In addition to the efforts of the United Nations, Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have assisted liberal feminist movements in MENA. During the 1994 Arab regional meeting, which was drafting plans of action to be introduced at the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women, NGOs took on greater involvement in feminist activism. In addition to international NGOs, this regional meeting included representation from several North African countries. Activist Nadia Hijab noted, "There was an interesting dynamic

[47] Been Sarwar, "Pakistan: Brutality against Women Disguised as Tradition," New York Times, 4 August 2002.

between the different groups, which led to a watershed in the way women's issues in the region are discussed. NGO's learned how to 'lobby' governments to get their views reflected… NGOs were responsible for introducing several new sections."[48] The NGO involvement was noticeable both in its level of influence and by its sheer numbers. The UN had only expected around three hundred NGOs; over nine hundred actually came. These represented numerous interests "from welfare and charitable institutions, to family planning associations, to legal rights groups and human rights groups."[49]

An example of these interesting dynamics can be seen in the disagreement between Sudan and Algeria. During the conference, the representative from Sudan protested the draft text that was being developed in regards to women's rights on cultural and religious grounds. Algeria counterbalanced the objections by the Sudanese representative. The Algerian delegates "spoke forcefully and movingly against the misuse of Islam as a tool for terror against women," and the Algerian minister went so far as to describe, "…how fundamentalists were seeking to impose the veil and to prevent women form participation in public life, going so far as to attack schools and schoolgirls."[50] The Algerian minister received a standing ovation from the assembled representatives and NGOs for his remarks. Nadia Hijab sums up the effect that is being felt in MENA and provides further room for involvement and influence:

> There has been a qualitative change in the way women's activists work at the national level. Many have moved beyond the elites in the capital city to undertake outreach activities at the grassroots level, where they are in contact with the reality of women's lives. And many Arab women participate in international conferences, where they learn from and contribute to the international debate,

[48] Nadia Hijab, 49.

[49] Ibid, 51.

[50] Ibid.

> and they have therefore gained confidence and expertise in articulating the issues they face in international terms.[51]

Liberal feminists are actively engaged in working to change laws that directly effect women and are seen as being repressive or unjust. The three case studies of Iran, Afghanistan, and Algeria provide specific examples of liberal feminist groups, how and why they emerged, how they are mobilizing, how they are framing their arguments, and what successes, if any, they have had.

D. ISLAMIC FEMINISTS

Closely related to the work of liberal feminists is Islamic feminism. Islamic feminism emerged from the Iranian revolution as a result of the oppression of women that followed Ayatollah Khomeini's consolidation of power and the subsequent crackdown on existing gender relations, which Islamic fundamentalist groups such as Fedayan-i Islam denounced as being un-Islamic and Western. Ziba Mir-Hosseini refers to Islamic feminism as "a term that continues to be contested by both the majority of Islamists and some feminists, who see it as antithical [sp] to their respective positions and ideologies."[52] The term originated in Iran in the 1990s in the Teheran women's journal *Zanan*, "describing it as an Islamic project of rereading the Qur'an, women-centered readings of religious texts, or 'scholarship-activism' as it is referred to in the 2001 book *Windows of Faith* edited by Gisela Webb."[53] One of the main difficulties with the term is that most of the producers and writers of Islamic feminism do not refer to themselves as feminists. But the term is becoming widely accepted and used, particularly with the Muslim Diaspora on the Internet.[54]

According to the Emir of Qatar's wife, Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al Missned, "Islamist principles do not have to be at odds with women's rights."

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[51] Hijab, 52.

[52] Ziba Mir-Hosseini.

[53] Margot Bedran, "Islamic Feminism."

[54] Ibid.

Speaking to Carnegie Mellon graduates at the 2006 commencement ceremony, she highlighted the importance Islam accords to women:

> Islam has always guaranteed the full rights of women and women have always occupied a central role in Islamic civilizations. It is important for Muslim women, and particularly women form the Arab peninsula, to reclaim their OWN history, to recall figures like Ayesha, the wife of the prophet, whose thoughts and recollections formed a central part of Islamic scholarship; Nasiban bin Ka'ab the women warrior who fought in the battle of Uhud; and the scores of business women, judges, scholars and poets that people Islamic history… It is important to remember that these women were consulted in forming legislative order in Islamic societies and they heavily influenced policies that were to govern social, political, economical, and military issues. These same policies are the matrix of our life today.[55]

Another line of argument used by Islamic feminists is that "all traditional Quran interpretations were written by men."[56] Not only were they men, but they wrote during a time and in a cultural setting where the equality of women was not a reality of their daily lives, but reflected their own tribal and cultural heritages. It is this problem with interpretation that has allowed the patriarchic principles to become so pervasive. "They point out that classical, and also much of post-classical interpretation was based on men's experiences, male-centered questions, and the overall influence of the patriarchal societies in which they lived."[57]

Islamic feminists are using several different methods to counter these traditional interpretations of the faith. One method is to use hermeneutics to analyze the Qur'an. Hermeneutics is the method of interpreting and understanding the text. For the Islamic feminists, this involves a careful analysis

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[55] Sheikah Mozah Bint Nasser Al Missned, Consort of His Highness the Emir of Qatar, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation for Eduacation, Science, and Community Development, Keynote Address at Carnegie Mellon's 109th Commencement (21 May, 2006), http://www.cmu.edu/cmnews/extra/060522_sheikha.html, accessed 14 October 2007.

[56] Barbora Stowasser, "Gender Issues and Contemporary Quran Interpretations," in *Islam, Gender and Social Change*, ed. Yvonne Yabeck Haddad and John Esposito (New York, Oxford University Press, 1998), 39 – 40.

of each word and how it is used in context, and using comparable words elsewhere in the Qur'an to better understand how the word or text should be translated. This study also entails a contextual analysis of the surrounding culture and what was occurring during the time, as well as how other Islamic scholars have interpreted the text. Islamic feminists' principle argument is that the Qur'an declares men and women as equal. Not only is this reflected in the language of the Quran, but activists also look at historical examples of women from early Islam as evidence of the equality of women during the life of Mohammed, as well as during the period under the Caliphs. One example of this approach is the book *For Ourselves: Women Reading the Quran,* which was published by the international women's organization, "Women Living Under Muslim Laws," and is available on-line through their website. The authors describe this work as "a reflection of the many voices of women who interpret the Qur'an and engage with it in the context of their lived realities." As such, it does not offer an alternative blueprint for a brighter future for women in Muslim countries and communities, but simply forms part of the many challenges to monolithic, often male-dominated interpretations of the Qur'an and Muslim laws."[58] The case studies of Iran, Afghanistan, and Algeria offer specific examples of how Islamic feminist groups are mobilizing and framing their argument against radical Islamic fundamentalism.

E. CONCLUSION

Social Movement Theory will enable a focused understanding of the feminist movement in Muslim countries by examining the three case studies – Iran, Afghanistan, and Algeria, and what the ramifications might be on U.S. policy. The importance of the current feminist movement is best expressed by Margot Badran's analysis: "The oppressiveness of Islamism is leading these women not to abandon Islam but to question issues of gender within Islam and

[57] Margot Badran, "Islamic Feminism: what's in a Name."

possibly abandon Islamism."[59] The abandonment of Islamism and its accompanying Islamic fundamentalist ideology is exactly what the United States wants to have happen in response to the violence that has emanated as a result of its extreme fundamentalism. Mojab cites other academics and scholars who are optimistic about prospects for women's rights in Iran. They believe that a reinterpretation of Islam, together with lobbying, will eventually pave the way for granting women equal rights with men.[60] When viewed in the larger context of the Muslim world, the argument can be made that both the legal changes that liberal feminists are working toward, and a new understanding of Islam that the Islamic feminists are working toward, would help women's rights in the region. This combined effort between liberal feminists and Islamic feminists has the potential to act as a buffer against the spread or incursion of the more radical interpretations that Islamism brings.

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[58] *For Ourselves: Women Reading the Quran*, Women Living Under Muslim Laws [Web Site] http://www.wluml.org/english/pubsfulltxt.shtml?cmd[87]=i-87-3011, accessed 28 October 2007.

[59] Badran, "Understanding Islam, Islamism, and Islamic Feminism, 50.

[60] Shahrzad Mojab, 135. referring to S.M. Hashemi, "Hoquq-e ejtema'i-siyasi-ye Zanan dar chahar 'arseh" (The Social-political Rights of Women in Four Areas) *Farzenah: Journal of Women's Studies and Research*, Vol. 3, No. 8, 1997 (in Persian); And H. Hoodfar "Shifting Boundaries in Marriage and Divorce in Muslim Communities," editorial note to the Special Dossier, Women Living Under Muslim Laws, Vol. 1, Fall 1996.

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IV. IMPLICATIONS OF WOMEN IN AN ISLAMIC STATE: WOMEN IN IRAN, ALGERIA, AND AFGHANISTAN

A. INTRODUCTION

Women throughout the Muslim world are at the crossroads of radical Islamist Ideology and modernization. Over the last century in Afghanistan, Iran, and Algeria women have seen an over all improvement of their rights. But in each of these cases, the expansion of women's rights came to an abrupt stop and in effect turned the hands of time back to a time when women had little say in society as the result of Islamism taking hold in their countries. Women in Afghanistan, Iran, and Algeria were clearly affected by the Islamization of their countries and continue to be threatened by Islamism and its policies. This has occurred both at the political, societal, and at the personal level.

These case studies show that in these three countries that women have mobilized to challenge Islamist Ideology. This mobilization has occurred in response to the broken promises made to women by the Islamists and the subsequent repression of their rights. Women, when faced with the severe interpretation of Islamism, are most at risk, and have the most to loose if the Islamists are successful in creating their view of an Islamic state. Therefore women and women's organizations can be a valuable ally in the war of ideas.

The United States should actively engage women and women's organizations in the Muslim world to assist their activities and to strengthen U.S. efforts in limiting the impact of Islamism. This effort should use both direct and indirect methods in bolstering women's challenge to Islamism. Engagement should entail aligning U.S. foreign policy in a more consistent manner that places emphasis on women's role in resisting Islamism, as well as conducting an information campaign to inform and influence targeted populations of the danger that Islamism poses to them and portrays women's efforts positively in resisting the repressive policies of the Islamists.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section examines women and women's organizations in Iran and finds that the initial support that women and women's groups gave to the Islamist, quickly changed as a result of the broken promises of freedom in the name of Islam and the rights and freedoms they had enjoyed were stripped away. Iranian women and women's groups have been working at reversing those losses and have had some success. The second section will examine women and women's organizations in Algeria. Again, women who had fought as a part in the war for Independence were betrayed by the passing of the Family Code by the Islamists. Women mobilized to confront the loss of their rights and continued to challenge the Islamists throughout the Algerian civil war. Women's activism in Algeria resulted in the repeal of the Family Code and has reduced the influence of the Islamists. The third section will look at women and women's groups in Afghanistan that were mobilized by severe repression of the Taliban. Women's groups were unable to effect much change under the Taliban, but the groups that were formed are working towards educating and equipping women to be a part of Afghanistan's future. Section four concludes with a summary of thoughts and findings that have implications for future work with women and women's groups in resisting the influence of Islamism.

B. IRAN

1. Iran Introduction

If the Jihadists and Islamists are seeking the creation of an Islamic State or a nation ruled by Shari'a law, one must look at Iran as a model for what an Islamic State might look like. The Islamists use Iran as an example of an Islamic State in general terms because of the differences between Sunni's and Shia. Globally, Islamists saw Iran as a success in their quest for the creation of an Islamic state which in turn gave new hope to Islamists in other countries.

Iran is an important case study because it depicts the impact of Islamism on women living currently in an Islamic state under Islamist principles and policies. Iran also provides a different environment to analyze because it was never a colony of a western power, so the women's movement that exists there is more of its own making. Iran is also important because of the wide array of women and women's groups that have emerged to voice their dissent at the Islamists policies under which they are forced to live. This chapter will demonstrate that the broken promises and repression by the Islamists after the 1979 Iranian Revolution created the political opportunity for women and women's organizations to form organizations and voice their opposition to Islamism. Women's activism has resulted in a positive shift of perceptions among the Iranian people and has had success in having some oppressive laws changed but this women's movement has yet to have a lasting impact on the government due to the continued repression of women.

2. History of Women's Rights in Iran

The women's movement in Iran began with the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 -1911. This revolution resulted in the creation of a constitutional monarchy that began to embrace modernization. A women's movement was a part of this revolution and envisaged greater freedom for women as an important step in the modernization of Iran.[61] Women even garnered support for suffrage in 1911, when a male representative to parliament submitted a petition for women's suffrage.[62] This inspired an American advisor to the Iranian government to write, "The Persian women since 1907 had become almost at a bound the most progressive, not to say radical, in the world."[63]

[61] Nahid Yeganeh, "Women, Nationalism and Islam in Contemporary Political Discourse in Iran" (*Feminist Review*, No. 44, Nationalisms and National Identities, Summer 1993) 4.

[62] Shahrzad Mojab, "Theorizing the Politics of 'Islamic Feminism'" (*Feminist Review*, No. 69, Winter 2001) 128.

[63] Ibid.

The next evolution of women's rights in Iran was under the rule of Reza Shah Pahlavi (1925–1941). His goal was to further modernize Iran in which the state became an engine for social reform.[64] Reza established a state sponsored women's organization. Some of Reza's social reforms were the unveiling of women, free education for women and girls, and the right to work. Reza's changes occurred despite opposition from Shia clerics. Reza's reforms did not transfer over to the realm of family policies, which were still dominated by the Shia establishment. The Civil Code of 1936 evidences this. These laws allowed polygamy, divorce, custody rights - which belonged to men and not women, and women were not allowed to travel or to go to school without a man's written approval, or go to work without approval.[65]

The next series of advancements happened form 1941–1979 under the Shah, Mohammed Reza Shah. His reign, in the post World War II and colonial period, was characterized by political repression paired with social modernization and capitalism. The women's movement continued to develop focusing on women's legal status. In 1963, women gained the right to vote. The state also granted them equal education and employment. Women were still not treated equally in these areas with state policies encouraging them to work in feminine professions and received lower pay then their male counterparts.

The Family Protection Law (1967 and 1975) maintained the premises that women were the property of men.[66] The law did seek to curb abuses by males and created a family protection court that had jurisdiction over divorce and custody. Women also gained a little more latitude in asking for divorce, tightened polygamy rules for men, increased in the minimum age of marriage, and abortion under specific circumstances was legalized.[67] These laws did not stop or remove the dominance of the patriarchic system but did modernize them.

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[64] Yaganeh, 4.

[65] Ibid., 5.

[66] Ibid., 6.

[67] Ibid.

These changes to the position of women became a seed of discontent.

> Since the state had made a claim to women's liberation and the secular opposition had not constructed an alternative gender policy to that of the state, the gender aspect of the demand for the overthrow of the Pahlavi state became the preserve of the Islamic opposition.[68]

The Islamic opposition appealed to women to reject the states "Westernized" view of women.

> The radical demand for overthrow of the Pahlavi regime and its gender policies found credence with both religious and secular women because it promised political freedom, economic equality, social justice, cultural integrity, and personal fulfillment. It resulted in massive participation of women in the Iranian Revolution of 1979 which brought about the overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty and the establishment of the Islamic Republic.[69]

It took about two years for Ayatollah Khomeini to consolidate his position and for the completion of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic. The Constitution "gave a prominent place to women, defining them as both mothers and citizens, and regarded the establishment of an Islamic nation as dependent on the Islamization of women's position."[70] A cornerstone of this ideology was the "patriarchal relations which strengthened the male control over women in the family while granting women the right to be active participants in society."[71]

The process of the Islamization of women has been referred to as sexual apartheid.[72] Ayatollah Khomeini abolished the Family Protection Laws of 1967 and 1975 and the family courts jurisdiction over divorce and custody. The state declared the existing gender relations were un-Islamic and were Western and re-imposed the veil on all Iranian women.

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[68] I Yaganeh, 7.

[69] Ibid..

[70] Ibid., 8.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Mojab, 129.

> Islamization was achieved through gender segregation in the education system, imposition of the *hejab* on women, reinforcement of gender division of subjects, and preservation of male dominance in education.[73]

Employment was another major area affected by Islamization. Ayatollah Khomeini called for an 'Administrative Revolution' in 1980 that focused on imposing the hejab, segregating male and female workers, firing non-Islamic employees, and removing secular employees with Islamic supporters. Many women reacted by protesting against the mandatory wearing of the hejab which just resulted in them being fired.

The real impact of the Islamization of Iran was in the area of individual rights. Ayatollah Motahhari, a leading Islamic ideologue, prioritized the rights of the Muslim community over that of the individual and "the interests of the Muslim community in defining women's appearance and sexuality takes precedence over women's individual choice."[74] This was accomplished through mandatory wearing of the hejab and through segregation policies. "The imposition of the hejab was a long an difficult one and it has become the most fiercely implemented policies of the Islamic Republic."[75]

These difficulties can be seen in some of the statements of Iranian women and reports from Non Governmental Agencies that monitor human rights. Numerous Non-Governmental agencies monitor and report on human rights abuses of which a large percentage of these concern Iran's policies towards women. A 1997 Human Rights Watch reports the following incidents:

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[73] Yeganeh, 12.

[74] Ibid., 15.

[75] Ibid.

> Restrictions on personal liberty had a harsh impact on women. In Nov. 1995, the security forces announced that they had detained 86,000 suspects in the previous 12 months. "Most of them were thought to have been women detained for violating the dress code…".[76]
>
> Women continue to be hounded to comply with petty restrictions by extra-governmental enforcers of Islamic orthodoxy. In May, police authorities began implementing a decree prohibiting women from riding in the front seats of taxis. Detention of women for failure to observe the dress code continued. In an interview, President Rafsanjani "urged women to accept the limitations nature had imposed on them."[77]
>
> Cites increasing arbitrary harassment of women. In June 1993, police issued statements condemning women's smiles as arousing corruption in men… In August, in the city of Tabriz, hundred of demonstrators were arrested and some killed in protests after the Basji (militia) attacked young women who had mixed with men at the end of a soccer match. The government forbids the mixing of women and men. Reports two cases of women stoned to death for adultery.[78]

A separate report by the United Nations, Economic and Social Council Commission of on Human Rights, Feb. 1994 reports the following on the situation in Iran:

> many women in southern Iran are beheaded by their male relatives for real or imagined sexual misconduct and that the killers often went free… On June 24, 1993, over 800 "inadequately covered" women were arrested and sentenced to flogging.[79]

Iran's Islamization program, which centered on mandatory segregation and dress codes, were not the freedoms promised them by the revolution. Women continue to protest the state's policies despite the certainty of arrest and

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[76] Human Rights Watch, Mater Exhibit Series, Iran, Status of Women, produced by Committee for Humanitarian Assistance to Iranian Refugees, August 1997

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Master Exhibit Series, August 1997.

punishment. A key part of this has been the continued existence of a women's movement in Iran. In addition, the women's movement has found some support with moderate clerics who favor a reinterpretation of Islam or *ijtihad* (the endeavor of a Muslim scholar to derive a rule of divine law from the Koran and Hadith without relying on the views of other).

3. Women's Organizations in Post Revolution Iran

Many of the same women and women's organizations that had been a part of the Iranian revolution now turned their energies and activism on the new government as a result of their being denied some of the very freedoms that they thought they were fighting for. This was primarily in reaction to Ayatollah Khomeini's decision to remove the Family Protection Law and the imposition of mandatory veiling. These events brought women into the streets to raise their voices in protests. A celebration planned by groups for International Women's Day, March 1979, turned into a protest against Khomeini's announcement about the veiling of women and banning of the Family Protection Law. Thousands of women gather in the streets of Tehran asking Prime Minister Bazargan to hear their plea. Media reports estimate that between 15,000 and 20,000 women joined the protest and that even more joined the march that immediately followed the demonstration.[80] Some of the slogans of the demonstrators were: 'Freedom in our culture; to stay at home is our shame' 'Liberty and equality are our undeniable rights' ' We will fight against compulsory veil; down with dictatorship' ' In the dawn of freedom, we already lack freedom' 'Women's Day of Emancipation is neither Western, nor Eastern, it is international' 'Freedom does not take rules

[80] Homa Hoodfar, "The Women's Movement in Iran: Women at the Crossroads of Secularization and Islamization," in *The Women's Movement Series* No.1 (Winter 1999): 25.

and regulations".[81] This event signaled the break of women's support for the revolution and the start of a new struggle against the Islamism of Khomeini's regime.

Dr. Roksana Bahramitash, an Iranian Sociology professor at McGill University in Canada states:

> It was this contradiction – on one hand bringing women into the public domain, and on the other, giving them no legal rights and no recognition of their contributions – that paved the way for gender politics. The irony was that while Khomeini had called for women to break the curfew in order to combat the previous regime, and later issued a fatwa calling on them to become involved in the political and public sphere, he did not allow them any commensurate legal gains in return.[82]

Women and Women's groups mobilized to face this new challenge form the Islamists of Khomeini's Government. The loss of rights and the brutal repression of dissent fomented the women's movement. Some of the post-revolutionary Islamist women's organizations that emerged as a result of the Islamists were the Women's Society of Islamic Revolution, the Iranian Islamic Women's Institute, the Ḥaẓrat-i Khadīja Association, the Women's Solidarity Association, and the Social-Cultural Council of Women. The largest and most influential of these organizations is the Women's Society of the Islamic Revolution whose stated objective is "to develop culturally appropriate ways of building a society that would end women's oppression."[83]

One approach that these groups used was Islamic feminism. The Islamic feminist approach, which began in Iran, has played an enormous role in the women's movement in Iran. Due to the limited political space afforded by the Government of Iran, Islamic feminism has taken the lead internal to Iran in

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[81] Pedram Missaghi, "Right to Chose," Iranian.com [website]; available from http://www.iranian.com/History/2000/March/Women/index.html; Internet; accessed 29 November 2007.

[82] Roksana Bahramitash, "Iranian Women during the Reform Era (1994 – 2004) A focus on Employment," Journal of Middle East Women's Studies, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Spring 2007) p 92.

[83] Bahramitash, p 27.

confronting government and has incorporated other methods such as liberal feminism to its arguments. This is due to the complete dominance of Shari'a as the primary legal basis for Iran. "The secular women's struggle, although important, has unfortunately been neither adequate nor widespread enough to change the strong religious structure of social and political life of today's Iran."[84] This has left Islamic feminism as the primary mobilization structure for women to effectively raise issues and have their voices heard in Iran. "Islamist feminists established branches in provincial towns and engaged themselves in consciousness-raising and the promotion of their own Islamic visions on gender."[85] Mir-Hosseini states "Women's legal rights in Iran must be raised and addressed within a religious framework, where jurisprudential construction of gender can be re-examined and gender inequality can be redressed."[86]

"Twenty-five years after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, we are now witnessing the flourishing of feminist rereading of the sacred texts, a shift some scholars declare to be so radical that it has no counterpart in the rest of the Muslim world."[87] John Espositio writes, "The early years of Islamic women's activism [in Iran] generated the drive to rethink gender in Islam in new and sometimes radical ways. Iran offers a good case study of reinterpretation (*ijtehad*) not simply of traditional Islamic theological and legal sources, but rather an effort that went directly to interpreting legal sacred texts."[88]

One of the leading resources for this discourse has been Iranian women's journals and magazines that has drawn on educated Iranian women as a resource as well as a market. These magazines and journals were able to raise

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[84] Fereshteh Ahmadi, "Islamic Feminism in Iran: Feminism in a New Islamic Context," Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion, Vol. 22, No. 2 (2006) 34.

[85] Ahmadi, 28.

[86] Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Religious Modernists and the "Woman Question": Challenges and Complicities," from Eric Hoogland, ed. *Twenty Years of Islamic Revolution: Political and Social Transition in Iran since 1979* (Syracuse University Press, 2002) 76.

[87] Mir-Hosseini, 37.

[88] Esposito, "Introduction," xix.

sensitive subjects that had an impact in Iranian thought. The most prominent of these being *Zanan* (Woman), which was started in 1992. Others magazines include *Payam-e Zan* (Women's Message), *Zan-e Ruz* (Today's Woman), *Khanevadeh* (Family), and *Rah-e now* (The New Way) all of which are active in discussing the woman question and other issues that deeply affect women in Iran. One leading theme in these magazines is the continued criticism of unfair aspects of traditional and conventional religious beliefs and practices while putting forward newer conceptualizations of women in an ideal Islamic society.[89]

The Islamic feminists have had success in influencing the political and legal process through their publications. "They pointed out that much of what is being presented to women as Islamic and 'authentic Islamic ways' is nothing but 'patriarchy in Islamic costume.'"[90] Women activist have used print media, women's gatherings and demonstrations, and radio and television to bypass the government and communicate directly with the Iranian public. This method has proven to be very successful. Two examples of the success that this method had are changes to the Family Law and child custody for widows.

Khomeini introduced a new Family Law after Islamic feminists conducted a campaign to raise awareness of the impact of temporary marriages and of men marrying young women and then divorcing them later. Newspapers and Magazines ran stories of women who became pregnant during temporary marriages and then were unable to find the father. At the same time, they were also featuring stories of middle age women who had been divorced and the husbands did not comply with financial compensation laws or pay alimony because they were marrying another young woman.

> Magazines and Newspapers printed open letters to the religious leaders asking if this was the way to achieve Islamic justice. "How

[89] Homa Hoodfar, "The Women's Movement in Iran: Women at the Crossroads of Secularization and Islamization," in *The Women's Movement Series* No.*1* (Winter 1999): 27.

[90] Ibid., 30.

> can the religious leaders and our legal system leave the fate of women in the hands of men who are obviously not good and fair Muslims?" they asked.[91]

The pressure exerted resulted in Khomeini passing a new Family Law that specifically addressed temporary marriage and of not paying alimony after divorce.

> Although this law did not go as far as many Muslim women activists had hoped and leaves much to be desired, it was nevertheless in many respects, one of the more advanced marriage laws in the Middle East (outside Turkey and Tunisia).[92]

The next success that the women activist had was the issue of child custody as the result of the husband and father being killed during the Iran Iraq War. The law at the time gave custody to the paternal grandparent or other close male relative instead of the mother. This resulted in a double loss for Iranian mothers who had lost a husband in the war, also lost their children. Again, newspapers and magazines were at the heart of informing the public. The stories featured mothers asking, "How can that be fair?" and "How can a fair system justify that a woman be so tortured and punished for her wholehearted support of the revolution? Is this what we were promised by Islamic justice?"[93] Again, there was a public outpouring of sympathy and Ayatollah Khomeini issued a decree granting martyrs' widows custody of their children.

Both of these successes on the part of women activists demonstrate the success women activist had in framing the issue of women's rights as a very personal manner. These stories were not contrived but reflected a reality that the people of Iran could see not only in the papers, but in the lives of people that they

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[91] Homa Hoodfar, "The Women's Movement in Iran: Women at the Crossroads of Secularization and Islamization," in *The Women's Movement Series* No.*1* (Winter 1999): 33.

[92] Hoodfar, 34.

[93] Ibid.

knew. Relating the stories of women helped to inform the population, which then was able to exert greater influence on the government then a women's group lobbying on their own.

Another area of contention that the Islamist feminist addressed was the battle over the hijab. Most Islamist feminist embrace the hejab, or veil, as a part of dressing modestly and as their symbolic place as a Muslim women, but they argued strongly against forced wearing of the hijab. They would march in demonstrations against the hejab. On numerous occasions, Islamic feminists would attempt to defend women not wearing a veil in those marches from police. They also argued that the dress code should apply equally to both men and women with both sexes dressing modestly.[94] Demonstrations and protests over the hejab continue despite the crackdown by the police that has resulted in the arrests of hundreds of thousands of protestors and numerous deaths as reported by Amnesty International, the International Red Cross, and Human Rights Watch.

Women's groups framed part of their argument in this statement: "It is time for *ijtihad*!"[95] This slogan used by Iranian women's organizations is one of the ways that women framed their argument. The single largest women's mobilization since the days of the revolution occurred under this banner. On June 12, 2005, over two thousand women from over 90 different organizations participated in a demonstration at the Tehran University to push for an amendment to the Iranian constitution that would allow women to run for the presidency. Other women and women's organizations also conducted demonstrations simultaneously in other major cities under the same banner.

The whole argument emerged as a result of Islamic feminism analysis of language and early translations of Arabic. The women's groups were pushing for a wider understanding of the word *jol-e siyasi* (political person). They argued that the word really "means 'politically knowledgeable person,' and that the

[94] Hoodfar, 28.

[95] Ahmadi, 37.

Arabic term *rajul* does not necessarily refer to men exclusively but rather means 'a person.'"[96] There demonstration had little real effect in changing the constitution but it did demonstrate women's ability to mobilize.

Women and Women's groups had some success after the death of Khomeini and during the presidency of Khatami. Women and women's groups were instrumental in the election of Khatami, who ran on a reformist platform. Khatami promised to address gender rights and other women specific political concerns. The power of women as a voting block was realized when of the 88% percent of eligible voters, 40% of them were women.[97]

After his election, Khatami expanded the Bureau of Women's Affairs and more significantly appointed Massoumeh Ebtekar as the first female vice president of Iran. During Khatami's presidency, women's political participation increased, with 114 representatives in 109 cities on the local councils, and the number of women journalists and NGO activists increased.[98] Education also continued to improve with a jump from 52% of girls being literate in 1975 to 91% in 2000 and for a jump from 30% to 69% for women.[99] In 2000, a study conducted about the awareness, attitudes, and socio-cultural behavior in Iran suggests that there has been a major improvement about the general concerning the role of women in society and that education is credited with creating a more accepting attitude about women's employment.[100]

Education for girls and women has been one of the strongest programs by many of these women's groups. Unlike Afghanistan, Iran has always had a strong tradition of education for girls. But, after the revolution and the segregation of the schools, women's groups placed a renewed effort into female

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[96] Bahramitash, 89.

[97] Hoodfar, 40.

[98] Bahramitash, 96.

[99] Ibid., 97; Bahramitash also postulates that the educations of women and girls has led to a rise in the public role of women.

[100] Ibid., 99.

education. Dr. Roksana Bahramitash argues, “To some extent it [education] has been the driving force behind women’s rising public role.”[101] She cites that women make up 60% of the university graduates, many of whom leave their homes to study in the smaller cities because there is easier access to education. In addition, there has been a sharp increase in the number of women involved in ‘women’s studies.’ Dr. Bahramitash also argues that this has had two effects, first that educated women are better able to stand on their own and think for themselves thus they are better equipped to defend their rights. Second, she argues that just the mere presence of women, away form their families has had a moderating effect on the smaller cities in which they are studying. There has been an accompanying transformation “of social values regarding the role of women in these smaller cities where new universities attract large numbers of single young women and where they reside in student housing.”[102] So not only are women better educated, their mere presence in the public sphere has changed the perception of the rights and roles of women.

The international community has also applied pressure to Iran on the basis of human rights, much of which is specifically women’s rights, or the lack thereof. This is due in part to Iranian oppositional forces and feminists in exile. They use the international media to inform the world and expose the continued oppression of women under the Islamist regime of Iran. International feminist organizations help to frame what is occurring in Iran as “Gender Apartheid”. Through the international media, they have been able to bring pressure on the Government of Iran to change their policies.

> The official promotion of a gender-apartheid society by a movement that has claimed to represent the oppressed, especially with compulsory veiling, and stories of stoning women and the like, offer tempting headlines to the European and North American media.[103]

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[101] Bahramitash, 97.

[102] Ibid., 98.

[103] Hoodfar, 32.

4. Iran Analysis

Iran is an important case study when examining the role of women and women's organizations in MENA. The Islamists policies towards women was the political opportunity that led to a large scale women's movement operating for a common goal – to have their rights and freedoms returned to them. These groups, working within the highly constrained and repressive environment of Iran have been able to mount an effective resistance to Islamism. Their argument was framed as primarily as that of Muslim women seeking the promised Islamic justice. Slogans such as, "It's time for *Ijtihad*!" or questioning Islamic Justice as being just communicated their desire for fair treatment from a regime that was supposedly founded on the principles of Islamic justice. These arguments resonated with the people of Iran and the mass pressure that resulted was successful in changing some of the repressive policies of the regime towards women. In addition to applying indirect pressure, women were successful in voting in Khatami who ran on a pro-women platform; so Iranian women have proven their power as a voting block when given a candidate that can represent their interests.

Through Islamic feminism, women's information campaigns, and education women's organizations have been able to challenge the Islamist regime and have won some small victories in the battle over the woman question. The education of girls and women was also used to resource women so that they could make an effective challenge to the Islamic regime. The continued emphasis on education and the growing numbers of women with higher degrees is a promising trend that women will continue to confront the Islamist policies in an effort to regain freedoms that existed prior to the revolution and in effect reduce the impact and the spread of radical Islamist thought. The broken promises of the Islamists and the continued repression of Iranian women's rights will continue to mobilize women in resisting the Islamists policies of the Iranian government. These same women and women's organizations could be valuable allies in the war of ideas.

C. ALGERIA

1. Introduction

Algeria provides an excellent case study on the role of Islamism and women due to women's groups' resisting to Islamist policies and laws, and the violence of groups such as the Islamic Salvation Front. This chapter will provide a historical overview of Afghan women's rights and the emergence of women's organizations as the result of the Islamist passing the Family Code and the subsequent emergence of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). Women's groups mobilized to face the threat posed by the Family Code and the Islamists on their rights and roles in Algerian society. These organizations framed their arguments as a broken promise of the revolution and used the powerful images and names of Algerian women who became heroes for their leadership in resisting the French. These women's groups were instrumental in preventing the FIS and its splinter groups from gaining further popularity with the people. In addition, Algerian women organizations were instrumental in the repeal of the Family Code. Algeria is an important example of the power that women have when working in a concerted manner for a common objective.

2. Historical Look at Algerian Women's Rights

Algerian women's rights and their roles in Algerian society have experienced some changes throughout the last several centuries. In 1830, France conquered Algeria, and France quickly dismantled much of the original society and declared Algeria "a full and integral part of France."[104] These policies had a deep and lasting effect on women in Algeria, which finally had an outlet during the Algerian war for independence in the 1950s. The years after the war for independence also saw some changes. The Family Code enacted in

[104] Aziz Enhaili and Oumelkheir Adda, "State and Islamism in the Maghreb," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* Vol. 7, No. 1 (March 2003) found online at http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2003/issue1/jv7n1a6.html; accessed 13 November 2007.

1984 was the push that gave rise to the women's movement in Algeria. The opposition to this law gave new life to the women's movement. The 1990 civil war made the "woman question" a leading issue between the Islamists and the modernizers. The historical core socio-cultural roles for women are based on Berber and Islamic traditional foundations, which are predominately patriarchal with strong Bedouin underpinnings, in which the separation of women and men outside of the home was a primary feature.[105]

Women in Algeria, like many other countries in MENA, had a relative amount of freedom and mobility in the rural areas. This was due in large part to the physical nature of the work that women did as a part of the rural family, and less intrusion by non-family members. In urban areas, women were more secluded and often veiled. French colonizing in the 1830s only strengthened this readily identifiable role of women inside Algerian society, which was a reaction against the French conquerors, and used as a means to protect women from the foreigners.

The French worked to improve women's positions in Algeria but had little success. They launched educational, social, and economic programs particularly in the 1930s and 1940s, opening numerous schools. This had little effect, however, because the "Muslim families remained unmoved; they kept their girls at home."[106]

The only identifiable success for the French, in regards to liberalizing social policies and cultural expressions for women, was in the capital city of Algiers, but this was mostly superficial. By 1954 and the start of Algeria's war of national liberation, 98% of women remained illiterate.[107]

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[105] Boutheina Cheriet, "Gender, Civil Society, and Citizenship in Algeria," *Middle East Report,* No. 198 (January – March 1996) , 22.

[106] Alf Andrew Heggoy, "On the Evolution of Algerian Women," African Studies Review, Vol. 17, No. 2 (September 1974), 452.

[107] Ibid., 451.

During the revolution, the French redoubled their efforts to improve the standing of women in Algerian society using social, economic, and political reforms. One specific example is that the number of girls in school nearly doubled in the area around Algiers from 1955 to 1959. In addition, in 1958, women were given the right to vote for the first time in the history of Algeria.[108] But, in spite of these efforts, Algerian women fought the French for their country's independence.

During the revolution, women were able to move about in the public sphere and were seen by Algerian males as an important part of the revolution. In addition, "Veiled women participated in numerous anti-French marches and strikes" raising the level of women's participation in the greater Algerian society.[109]

Muslim women took an active role in the revolution as fighters, and by increasing their general presence in public as a means of silent protest against the French. Some stopped wearing the veil because they were less likely to be stopped and searched by the French. This enabled women to act as messengers and to carry supplies to the rebels. One *moudjahida* (Algerian female fighter), who came to symbolize the role of the Muslim woman during the revolution, was Hassida Ben Bouali, who was killed in the battle of Algiers in 1957, and has become a symbol for Algerian women. The French tortured women who were part of the rebellion and two of these became heroes, Djamila Bouhired and Djamila Boupacha.

"Algerian women played an important role in the struggle for independence as *moudjahidates*, but after the war they were expected to return to their domestic roles."[110] The movement of women from the seclusion of the

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[108] Heggoy, 453.

[109] Susan Slymovics, "Hassiba Ben Bouali, If You Could See Our Algeria: Women and Public Space in Algeria," *Middle East Report, No 192*, January – February 1995, 9 – 10.

[110] Catherine Lloyd, "Organizing Across Borders: Algerian Women's Associations in a Period of Conflict," *Review of African Political Economy,* Vol. 26, No. 82 (December 1999) 481.

home and veil to the public sphere was short lived after the 1962 liberation of Algeria from France. Dr. Alf Heggoy, a prominent historian who specialized in studying Algeria stated, "Unfortunately for Algerian women, the promises made in the heat of revolution were soon forgotten after independence."[111] Women expected to be emancipated as an indirect consequence of their participation in the struggle for independence, and hoped to maintain the freedoms that they had been able to express during the revolution. David Gordon concludes in his book *Women of Algeria: An Essay of Change*, the revolution was fought in order "to bring into being a modern nation along socialists lines [and] to resurrect and restore culture… that was essentially Arabic and Islamic."[112] For women in Algeria this was not to be a reality. Heggoy states that this was due, in part, to the fact that men were still interpreting the verses dealing with women in the Qur'an in a traditional manner.[113]

3. Emergence of Women's Groups and Feminist Organizations

In the years after the revolution, women began to form women's groups. The first such group was the Union Nationale des Femmes Algeriennes (UNFA). Formed in 1963, UNFA was the official body established by the government to address women's concerns. But the group was controlled by the Front de Liberation Nationale (FLN), the authoritarian regime that ruled Algeria, and did little other than act as a means of informing women about the actions of the FLN government.

The political opportunity that brought women together to form organizations, and back out into the public sphere, was the attempt to draft and pass a Family Code. There were multiple attempts starting in the 1960s and 1970s that brought women out into the streets for demonstrations, but the real

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[111] Heggoy, 454.

[112] David Gordon, *Women of Algeria: An Essay on Change* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1968) referenced in "On the Evolution of Algerian Women" 454.

[113] Heggoy, 454.

pressure from the Islamists to pass the Family Code started in 1982. The bill focused on the patriarchic structure of Algerian society, specifically addressing the role of women in the family.

> The bill expressed the intent to preserve a dominant patrilineal familial structure and the subsidiary status of women within it. The bill also introduced limits on women's participation in the public arena by conditioning their right to work on husband's permission – a provision nowhere to be found in the *shari'a* and its official schools of interpretation but abundantly manifested in Algerian customs of women's effacement and dependence on male kin.[114]

This attempt initially failed due to "the onslaught of conservatives, marches organized by women form professional circles, and the protests of a few war veterans concerned about the promulgation of such retrograde provisions."[115] One such group was organized in the city of Oran and conducted seminars to inform women and the public about the proposed legislation. They also conducted street demonstrations led by former *moudjahidates,* drawing women from professional organizations, teachers, and students to participate. Failing to pass the code did not end the pressure from Islamists; it only increased it, and on 9 June 1982, the *Qanun al-Usrah* (Family Code) was passed. "It established man's dominance over women, legalized polygamy, men's right to repudiate their wives, institutionalizing sexual inequality in inheritance, matrimonial guardianship and other fundamental discriminations."[116] With the exception of polygamy, the Family Code incorporated the rulings of Muslim legal scholars from the eighth through twelfth centuries.

The passing of the Family Code was the political event that precipitated the growth of the feminist movement in Algeria. The result was that women mobilized themselves into organizations to lobby for change and to protect themselves from the Islamists. "In May 1985 the *Association pour l'égalité*

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[114] Boutheina Cheriet, "Gender, Civil Society and Citizenship in Algeria," *Middle East Report, No. 198, Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East* (Jan. – Mar. 1996) 24.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Lloyd, 482.

devant la loi entre les homes et les femmes (Egalite) brought together some thirty women's organizations'' working toward the amendment or abolishment of the Family Code.[117] Central to their argument was that the Algerian laws and constitution guarantee equality or non-discrimination that directly contradicts the Family Code, therefore, the Family Code is unconstitutional.

Women's organizations received another boost in 1989, when the government amended the constitution as the result of the economic crisis and riots that occurred in the mid 1980s to 1988. The amended constitution allowed for a multi-party parliamentary system and liberalized the laws governing other types of groups or associations. The next years, over twenty new women's organizations were founded, all focused on changing or removing the Family Code. "Feminists protested the family code from the very beginning. On March 4, 1985, a group of women rallied in the Kasbah of Algiers on the site where Hassiba Ben Bouali had been killed."[118] The feminists were clearly evoking the memory of the revolution and the role that women played, in contrast to the new law.

These women's organizations each approached the problem in different ways. Two of the most prominent forms of response were from the Islamic feminists and the liberal feminists. Groups such as the *Association pour la Défense et la promotion des droits de la femme* and *Association pour la promotion de la femme* represented the Islamic feminist approach, and "they referred to a progressive reading of Islam to justify their demands."[119]

Groups such as *Egalité, Voix des Femmes*, and *Tighri net mettout* represented the liberal feminists. These groups specifically focused on the abolishment of the Family Code and any other laws that discriminated against women. They were vocal about demanding a "civil code which guarantees

[117] Lloyd, 482.

[118] Slyomovics, 11.

[119] Lloyd, 483.

sexual equality, bans polygamy, divorce, paternal guardianship, the equal rights in law of both parents and established the unconditional right of women to employment."[120] Both the Liberal feminist groups and the Islamic feminist groups conducted demonstrations, circulated petitions, and conducted lobbying in an effort to change the Family Code.

In 1989, the various women's groups throughout Algeria formed the National Women's Coordination forum. This forum established a minimum platform in calling for change. Opposition to the Family Code was given top priority, as all of the groups saw it as being unconstitutional. Other issues such as women's right to work, voting for themselves instead of having a male guardian vote for them, and education rights were also agreed upon as being important issues for change.[121]

The women's groups that were formed used the history and idealism of the war of independence with France to frame their argument. The images of the *moudjahidates,* have been a powerful symbol for the women of Algeria and as a means of framing the argument for women's rights. During demonstrations in 1992 against the Family Code and violent actions of the Islamists, demonstrators raised signs and chanted: "Hassiba Ben Bouali, We Will Not Betray You" and Hassiba Ben Bouali, If You Could See Our Algeria."[122] These signs and chants clearly referred to one of the heroes of Algeria, and attempted to remind Algerians of the important role that women played in the fight for independence from France. The Algeria in which they were living in was not the Algeria for which they had fought.

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[120] Lloyd, 483.

[121] Ibid.,

[122] Slymovics, 9–11.

4. The Rise of the Islamists and Their Impact on Women in Algeria

The constitutional changes of 1989, and the difficulties of the government, worked in favor of Islamists in Algeria. Prior to the revolution, the Islamists were active in resisting French rule and emphasized the religious nature of resistance to the French and issued a call for Jihad to liberate Algiers as early as 1830. During the war for independence, Islamists were at the forefront of resistance with much of the rhetoric reflecting the Islamist influence. This included characterizing resistance as Jihad and referring to those who were killed resisting the French as martyrs. After being granted independence, the Islamists were very active in continuing to build support.

The governing party, the FLN, "squandered its popular support [from leading in the war for independence with France] by building a one-party socialist state that badly mismanaged Algeria's deepening economic, social, and political problems."[123] The Islamists took advantage of this vacuum at the local level and established a network of social action outlets that met local needs and garnered them support using the Mosques and the Mullahs.[124] In addition, "the regime attempted to shore up its position by co-opting the Islamist movement and solidifying its own Islamic credentials."[125] This allowed room for extremist views to be preached in the mosques and taught in the public school system, where Islamic religious education was mandated. The passing of the Family Code was indicative of the influence of the Islamists and reflected the strengthening influence of the Islamists at the national level.

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[123] James Phillips, "The Rising Threat of Revolutionary Islam in Algeria," The Heritage Foundation, Background Paper #1060 (November 9, 1995) available from http://hertage.org/Research/Africa/BG1060.cfm; internet; accessed 13 November 2007.

[124] "The State, Fundamentalism and Women in Algeria," *Woman Against Fundamentalism Journal,* No. 4. (1992/1993) [journal online]; available from http:waf.gn.apc.org/j4p36.htm; Internet; accessed 24 October 2007.

[125] Ray Takeyh, "Islamism in Algeria: A Struggle between Hope and Agony," Council on Foreign Relations; available from http://www.cfr.org/publication/7335/islamism_in_algeria.html; accesses 13 November 2007.

The 1989 amendment to the constitution, allowing a multi-party system, gave the Islamists room to rapidly build a political party using the pre-existing support structure. This became the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) party, which was comprised of both moderate Muslims, as demonstrated in the leadership of Abbas Madani, and the more radical militant elements represented by Ali Belhaj as leaders for the FIS. The FIS won 54% of the seats during the 1991 local elections. The Islamists immediately started enacting policies such as mandating the veil on women employees, segregating offices, ordering people to remove their satellite dishes, and threatening to stop some cultural activities on the basis of being un-Islamic in the boroughs where they had gained control.[126] In December 1991, the FIS won the first round of national elections and seemed poised to take a majority during the next parliamentary elections. Faced with the threat of an Islamist victory, the army conducted a coup on 11 January 1992, removed President Benjedid, and canceled the elections. The army also instituted martial law and subsequently declared the FIS an illegal organization.[127]

This act fomented the Algerian civil war and a period of violence between the Islamists and the rest of the country lasting from 1992–2003, which greatly impacted women and women's organizations. The FIS was pushed underground where it subsequently split with the more radical factions gaining strength. These factions included the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS), which was the military wing of the FIS., The Islamic Army Movement (MIA), and the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), became the most violent and ruthless Islamic groups in the world. The AIS focused most of its actions against the government, while the GIA waged a

[126] Louisa Ait-Hamou, "Women's Struggle against Muslim Fundamentalism in Algeria," *Warning Signs of Fundamentalism*; [dossier online]; available from http://www.wluml.org/english/publistregional.shtml?cmd[24]=c-1-Africa; Internet; accessed 12 September 2007.

[127] Phillips.

culture war "to impose its vision of pure Islam on Algerian society by violently eliminating Western cultural influences that it considers a threat to that vision."[128]

The GIA , and to a lesser extent, the MIA, unleashed a terror campaign against women, slitting the throats of girls for not wearing the veil, raping women who were not accompanied by a male guardian, and assassinating working women, women not wearing the veil, and politically active women.[129] In March of 1994, the FIS/GIA issued a warning stating that any woman seen out on the streets without a veil would be killed and shortly thereafter two female students were killed while waiting at a bus stop.[130] Later that same year, the GIA issued a warning forbidding women from riding on trains due to the mixing of men and women in the passenger compartments. The GIA subsequently attacked and burned a train as further warning. In 1997, the GIA "began to massacre whole villages, resulting in large numbers of casualties, disproportionately women and children."[131] Their policies specifically targeted women because they symbolized opposition to the Islamists. "Any woman who is perceived as non-compliant was, and is still a target."[132]

5. Women Respond to the Islamists

Women and women's organizations resisted the demands and threats of the Islamists. Following the 1991 elections and the local victories for the FIS, women took to the streets in marches and demonstrations organized by women's groups to demonstrate against the FIS and the policies concerning women's rights. The signs referring to the *moudjahidates,* such as Ben Bouali who fought the French, frame women's fight as continuing to fight oppression of the Islamists

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[128] Phillips.

[129] Slyomovics, 11.

[130] Ibid.

[131] "Shadow Report on Algeria: To the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, January 1999" (International Women's Human Rights Law Clinic and Women Living Under Muslim Laws); Internet; available at http://www.wluml.org/english/publications.shtml; accessed 21 November 2007, 9–10.

[132] Shadow Report on Algeria, January 1999.

just as they fought the oppression of the French. Other signs read "Code de la Famille, Code de l'Infamie" (Family Code, Code of Infamy), Matvotich fi blasti (Do not vote for me/One Woman, One Vote) and still others chanted "Ya Benjedid, viens voir, les femmes sont dans la rue! Qui sommes-nous? Les Filles de Hassiba! (O Bendjedid [the Algerian president in 1989], come and see, women are in the streets! Who are we? The daughters of Hassiba!)"[133] The Coming of an Islamist State would be the negation of citizenship and Algerian identity.[134] Their simple slogans served to remind Algerians of what they fought for in the war of independence and to question whether that is the Algeria that they want to live in.

Algerian Women's groups won a victory in March 2005 when the Family code was reformed despite the objections from conservative groups such as the FLN and Islamists such as the Movement of the Society for Peace (MSP). The commission's president stated "that the proposed amendments are not attacks on the Shari'a but rather on the social customs that have been codified."[135] Women's opposition and public demonstrations were instrumental in the amendment of the Family Code as well as resisting the spread of Islamists ideas in the form of the FIS, GIA, and the MIA.

6. Algeria Analysis

Women and women's organizations played an active part in defending the rights and freedoms of all Algerians against the oppressive and unwanted dictates of the Islamists, and serve as a reminder and as an example, that there exist ideals about being a Muslim other than just the Islamists'. Women activist were instrumental in resisting the violence of Islamist groups during the Algerian Civil War and most importantly in changing the Algerian Family Code which

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[133] Abdelkader Cheref, "Engendering or Endangering Politics in Algeria? Salima Ghezali, Louisa Honoune and Khalida Messaoudi," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies,* Vol. 2, No. 2 (Spring 2006) 79–80.

[134] Slyomovics, 12.

[135] Cheref, 73.

signal a change in the influence of the Islamists on the Algerian government. In each instance, women mobilized and formed groups to maintain their rights and to defend them when threatened by Islamism. By resisting and making their struggle a public referendum women were able to remind the Algerian public of the promises of the revolution. They used the powerful imagery of the female fighter to remind Algerians of the Algeria they had fought for. In addition, the women's groups used the Islamists own violence against women to ask if this was the Algeria that the people wanted. These simple appeals resonated with the Algerian people and helped to reduce the popularity of the Islamist groups and have also been successful in repealing the Family Code that was enacted by the Islamists. The Algerian women's resistance to Islamism is evidence that women can be an important part resisting the spread and influence of Islamism.

D. AFGHANISTAN

1. Afghanistan Introduction

Afghanistan has clearly been the most affected country in the world by the rise of Islamism in the form of the Taliban, in regards to women. Afghanistan as a case study is important because data exists that demonstrates the progression of women's place in Afghan society in the years preceding the Taliban and what the subsequent imposition of Islamists policies had on women. Since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, evidence also exists that demonstrates women's role and women's groups' role in rebuilding Afghanistan. This section will demonstrate that women and women's groups mobilized to resist the Taliban and since the removal of the Taliban regime have worked to regain their rights. The women of Afghanistan also model the extreme impact Islamism can have. It is this model that is of value to other Muslim women in informing them of what the impact could be if Islamism is not resisted.

2. Women's Rights in the Years Preceding the Soviet Invasion

Women's place in Afghan society experienced many gains and losses in the years preceding the Taliban regime. In traditional Afghan society, women have held an inferior position legally and economically as in most Islamic countries. Under Shari'a law, a daughter receives half the inheritance that a son receives. In addition, a women's economic independence was traditionally restricted in that women were not allowed to work outside of the home and had little to no access to their dowry or bride price which was controlled by the husband or father. Legally, women had very little standing under the law. In court, a women's testimony only counts as half that of a man's. Women were greatly hindered in accessing any legal help due to the high rates of illiteracy as well as their ability to move outside of their homes without being accompanied by a close male relative. The ability for a woman to divorce a man or to gain custody of children was also another area of inequality.

In the Pashtun areas, a women's virtue was a critical part of the family and clan honor. Women were the carriers of a man's honor. Inside of the home, women had a great deal of influence but very little influence outside of the home.[136] The Pashtun patriarchal structures are very strict and varied from commonly accepted Islamic law as practiced in most other Muslim countries. These strict tribal codes have also had their effect on other tribes in the Afghanistan area especially in regards to marriage because of the importance of bride price and any land that may be associated with the price.[137] The Pashtun also comprise over half the population of Afghanistan, which makes their customs of even greater impact on their neighboring tribes. Under Pashtunwali (Pashtun customary Law), women are not allowed divorce or allowed to own

[136] Goodson Larry P., "Perverting Islam: Taliban Social Policy Towards Women," Central Asian Survey (2001), 20(4), 415–426,

[137] Valantine Moghadam, *Modernizing Women* (London, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.) 2003, 242.

land.[138] Women are also tied closely with or honor codes. "Women were the bearers of the family honor, and a man's reputation was measured through the behavior of the females in his household."[139] Men protected their honor by preventing women from ever being in a situation where they could violate that honor. This severe interpretation of seclusion "is customarily justified by invoking Quranic prescription and by the notion that women are basically licentious and tempt men."[140]

The twentieth century saw some gains for women's rights in Afghanistan but these were mostly top down efforts by the ruling elite. Between 1901–1919, Amir Habibullah Khan, enacted several reforms in education, marriage, and attempted to stop mandatory veiling with a guiding principle that women were a contributing part of society not just mothers.[141] He also decreed, "Men were entitled to full control of their women."[142] The next ruler of Afghanistan, King Amanullah (1919–1929), attempted to modernize Afghanistan and women's rights were a major part of his reforms. King Amanullah abolished the veil and seclusion as law "in the 1923-24 code *Nizamnamah-ye arusi, nijah wa khatnauri.*"[143]

Nader Shah (1929–1933) reversed these gains. He reinstituted both the veil and seclusion. This was a temporary setback in the modernization of women's rights. The next ruler, Zahir Shah (1933–1973) enacted several modernization programs to improved women's rights in Afghanistan. It was during this period that gender relations once again improved women's place in Afghan society. These changes gained momentum under the leftist regime of

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[138] Ruthven, 68.

[139] Das, Minakshi, "Taliban's War on Women: Life Experiences of Afghan Women in Transit on Ethnicity and Their Identity" (Asian Research Centre, London School of Economics and Politics) Working Paper 13, London, 2006, 13.

[140] Moghadam, 242.

[141] Das, 12.

[142] Ibid.,12

[143] Ibid.

Mohammed Daoud (1973–1978). The veil was optional again, Kabul University opened to women, and women were allowed to work in government offices and were able to run for public office.[144] "In 1977, they [women] comprised over 15% of Afghanistan's highest legislative body. It is estimated that by early 1990s, 70% of school teachers, 50% of government workers, and 40% of doctors in Kabul were women."[145] Of critical importance is to note that most of these gains were only realized in urban areas and were never fully implemented in the rural, tribal areas, which were still governed by more traditional tribal laws and customs.

3. Women during the Soviet Occupation

A pivotal moment for Afghanistan took place in 1979 with the invasion by the Soviet Union. 1979 was also a monumental year for Islamists with the Iranian revolution that gave new hope and power to Islamist movements. The Soviet invasion polarized Afghanistan and women's place in Afghan society more then ever. Some Afghan women benefited under the communist state with the backing of the Soviet Union. These were primarily isolated to the major cities where the Soviets enjoyed relatively more control and stability. Women were free to go to school (Kabul University had a female majority student population under the Communists), held positions in the government, held positions in all the professional sectors (doctors and teachers), and were not required to wear the veil.[146]

> The Communist Afghan regime introduced laws to raise the minimum age at marriage for girls to sixteen years, put limits on the traditional 'bride price' system, and allegedly forced women to participate in literacy programs. The Communist regime's

[144] Goodson, 417.

[145] U.S. Department of State, "Report on the Taliban's War Against Women," November 17, 2001 (found on line at http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/6183.htm) accessed 20 March 2007.

[146] Goodson, 417.

> modernization reforms to improve the status of women, was once again, unacceptable to segments of the predominantly Muslim population.[147]

These differences were at the heart of the resistance movement and become one of the most visible policy differences and a way to differentiate them from what they saw as the corrupting influence of the Soviets.

As much as the Soviets attempted to improve women's status, the presence of the Soviets marked the decline of women's rights in Afghanistan. "Women's status and control over women's behavior became symbols of the differences between the Communist governments and their mujahideen opponents."[148] The Soviet invasion and their subsequent policies, led to the Jihad (lesser Jihad) in which the Mujahideen vowed to remove the invaders from their soil. "Afghan women played virtually no part in the jihad. They were, however, conspicuous on the pro-Soviet side, with four out of the seven militia commanders appointed to the communist Revolutionary Council being women."[149]

The constant fighting displaced a large percentage of the population to refugee camps due to war as well as a drought that affected Afghanistan during this period. These refugee camps

> became a fertile ground for the new Islamist ideology of many of the mujahideen groups, which in combination with the dramatically different living conditions than traditional Afghan villages, curtailed women's freedom of movement and led to a retreat once again to the veil. The camps also bred a new generation of Afghan fighters, who came of age in a drastically altered society, where women's status and control over women's behavior and activities became symbols of the differences between the Communist governments and their mujahideen opponents.[150]

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[147] Das, 13.

[148] Ibid.

[149] Malise Ruthven, Fundamentalism: A Very Short Introduction (New York, Oxford University Press, 2007), 69–70.

[150] Goodson, 417.

4. Women during the Taliban Regime

The Soviets withdrew in 1989, leaving Afghanistan in a civil war with the different mujahideen leaders and warlords fighting for power. It was during this time that the Taliban began its rise to power in Afghanistan. The Taliban began in the Pashtun tribal regions in 1994, led by Mullah Mohammed Omar gaining power in 1996 and "established an Islamic fundamentalist regime under Sharia law."[151] The Taliban "have made the issue of women's roles and status a cornerstone of their Islamization programme. Indeed, the policies toward women and girls, in conjunction with the law and order policies, in many ways constitute the centerpiece of Taliban public policy."[152] Goodson goes on to say that, it was this displacement during the Soviet occupation that led to the perversion of the normal family and village system. It was in this environment "that many young boys failed to learn the traditional balance that existed among rural Afghans in their attitudes toward women – that women were to be controlled and respected."[153] The latter — *respect* — became an obvious problem as the Taliban gained more and more control of Afghanistan. In fact, the Taliban did not have any other policies that were as readily evident as their policies towards women. In *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban,* William Maley, puts forward the idea that the Taliban leaders actually feared women were a corrupting influence on their young teenage followers and saw them as a challenge to their leadership and legitimacy.[154]

It is important to note, however, that not all women in Afghanistan were against the Taliban or other likeminded mujahideen groups. There are cases in which women are portrayed as heroines for "exemplifying Afghan values, Islamic

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[151] James Dobbins and others, *America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq*, (Santa Monica, Ca: RAND Corporation, 2005), 129.

[152] Goodson, 417.

[153] Ibid.

[154] William Maley (ed.), *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban* (New York, New York University Press) 1998, 151.

virtue, family honor, and refusal to accept Communist dress code ideas."[155] One of these heroines was Nahida, who led schoolgirls and teachers in demonstrations against the Communist in Kabul in 1980–81.[156] Another of these female heroines is Tajwar Kakar. She set up a covert school to train boys as mujahideen fighters in Kunduz.[157] Malalai, a figure form Afghan history, was another example for the Taliban and the women of Afghanistan. Malalai fought in a battle against the British in 1880 and achieved a heroine's status. All of these women were used as an example of what the Taliban considered acceptable during war against an outsider. But this contrast sharply with the Taliban's policies once they were in control of a region.

Goodson, in his article "Perverting Islam: Taliban Social Policy Towards Women," identifies six major areas of the Taliban's policies regarding women. These are women's rights to appear in public, women's rights to work, girls' rights to education, women's rights to adequate health care, women's rights in personal dress, and women's rights before the law.[158] The Taliban policies towards women had a devastating effect not on just the women of Afghanistan but also on the country as a whole.

The Taliban's policy about women appearing in public, effected women who had already suffered the most during the decades of conflict and were the most at risk, the widows. "On 28 September 1996, Radio Kabul (Radio Shari'ah) announced, 'as per an order issued by the Amir al-mu'minin (the commander of the faithful), Mullah Mohammed Omar, women were not allowed to venture outside of their homes'."[159] Women were now required to be accompanied by a legally acceptable escort such as a close male family member. This is in keeping

[155] Das, 14.

[156] Ibid.

[157] Ibid.

[158] Goodson, 419.

[159] Das, 14.

with Pashtun tribal traditions but Islamic law does not require it.[160] Prior to the long period of conflict, this type of decree would not have had much of an impact, but in the war torn country, this policy had devastating effects.

When the Taliban took control of Kabul, there were approximately 7,900 registered widows. By the time the Taliban had consolidated their power over most of Afghanistan, this number had risen to approximately 17,700 widows with children in the 16 districts around Kabul.[161] These women were forced to rely on others who, more often then not, were not much better off then themselves. Women who were force to rely on themselves often faced punishment for simply trying to get something to eat because they had to violate the Taliban's edicts on women being in public without an escort. The United States Department of State (DOS) reports that the Taliban had one of the worlds worst human rights records. The DOS points out that the Taliban "has perpetrated egregious acts of violence against women, including rape, abduction, and forced marriage."[162] The report goes on to estimate that by 2001, there were approximately 50,000 widows who "have been forced to sell all of their possessions and beg in the streets, or worse, to provide for themselves and their families."[163] This is in direct opposition to the Taliban's own stated purpose for their campaign in 1994 to capture Kandahar. They justified their attack by saying they were fighting to eliminate the local warlord and soldiers who were preying on women and young boys for their pleasure.[164] The Taliban regime did little to assist these widows. The Taliban's repressive laws such as seclusion only made it more difficult for these women to meet even the most basic of their needs.

The Taliban's policies concerning girls and education were among the most contentious. Their policies had two effects. The first was by preventing

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[160] Goodson, 420.

[161] Das, 31.

[162] DOS Report, 17 November 2001.

[163] Ibid.

[164] Goodson, 417.

women from working, they dramatically cut the number of teachers (women were approximately 70% of the teachers). This policy kept women and girls repressed and illiterate making it all but impossible to contribute to the well being of their families. Prior to the Taliban taking control, education for both boys and girls was valued both by the rural Afghans as well as the urban Afghans. The Taliban eventually started to ease this regulation when confronted with Qur'anic evidence from religious scholars but they still limited education for girl only allowing the study of the Qur'an up to the age of eight.[165]

Taliban restrictions for women and health care had a devastating effect. The Taliban forbade male doctors from seeing or touching a female and female doctors were not allowed to work. The over all impact was a dramatic drop in the life expectancy of women. The life expectancy for a woman under the Taliban regime was 43–44 years, twenty years less then that of a developing country.[166] Infant mortality rates were also another dramatic symbol of the Taliban's policy. Infant mortality was the highest in the world with 163 per 1,000.[167]

The Taliban also took seclusion and dress codes very seriously. They imposed the burqa, and enforced it with threats, fines, and beatings. The Taliban required that houses with women paint their windows black to prevent them from inadvertently being seen. Nageeba, a 35-year-old widow in Kabul stated, "The life of Afghan women is so bad. We are locked at home and cannot see the sun."[168]

The Taliban justified its policies by saying they were attempting to "ensure a society in which women had a safe and dignified role"[169] but the exact opposite was the case. The numbers tell part of the truth to the world but most telling are the statements of the Afghan women themselves. Dr. Minakshi Das's study,

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[165] Goodson, 422.

[166] Ibid.

[167] Ibid.

[168] DOS Report, 17 November 2001.

[169] Ibid.

"Taliban's War on Women," focused on interviewing Afghan refugees. Here are a few of the statements from some of the women she interviewed.

- In Afghanistan people are hanged for no fault. There are no rules for humanity. Only the name Afghanistan remains, it is no longer what it was.[170]

- God has made me so beautiful that he forgot to give me good fortune …My nation thought my body belonged to it…We women have become properties of the state. We are objects to be used and then discarded…A women's body becomes the site of conflict, whereby she is forced to leave her country.[171]

- Because of the Taliban, Afghanistan has become a jail for women. We haven't got any human rights. We haven't the right to go outside, to go to work, to look after our children. – Faranos Nazir, 34 year old women in Kabul.[172]

Goodson points out that the Taliban justified every edict in terms of Islam.

> For the Taliban anyone questioning these edicts, which have no validity in the Koran, is tantamount to questioning Islam itself, even though the Prophet Mohammed's first task was to emancipate women…[The Taliban believed they] were right, their interpretation of Islam was right and everything else was wrong…[173]

Most of the Muslim world, decried the Taliban's policies towards women though, as being un-Islamic and only Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the United Arab Emirates gave diplomatic recognition to the Taliban

The Taliban also received support from Jihadists who extolled the Taliban as the model for what an Islamic State should be. "Bin Laden repeatedly argued that Afghanistan had become a model Islamic state under his Taliban hosts and

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[170] Das, 19.

[171] Ibid.

[172] Ibid., 23.

[173] Goodson, 421.

used religious rhetoric to solicit support for the Taliban and Al Qaeda."[174] Ayman Zawahiri praised the Mujahideen and described them as being "Murabit lions of Islam in Afghanistan who are aiding the religion of the Prophet, peace be upon him, in the face of the alliance of Crusaders and apostates."[175]

It is easy for an outsider, especially a westerner to say these policies are wrong or unacceptable but this does not carry much weight due to cultural sensitivity and knowledge of Islam. The real measure of the legitimacy of the Taliban's Islamic State was the people who were affected — the women of Afghanistan. The numbers of women who fled the regime and the statements and actions of these women is proof that this type of Islamization or creation of an Islamic State is not what they want for themselves, their families, or their country.

5. The Beginning of Afghan Women's Organizations

It was the Diaspora of women from Afghanistan that led to the initial development of women's organizations for Afghanistan during the civil war that followed the Soviet withdrawal and the subsequent emergence of the Taliban. The brutal repression of the Taliban in essence gave women the political opportunity to form these organizations. Mobilization of women's groups took two forms, one internal and the other from international assistance. Internally, covert groups formed out of necessity, and women who fled the country to refugee camps were able to form groups and receive aid form NGOs, many of which were women's aid organizations. Women's contact with each other in the refugee camps and their exposure to NGOs assisted the Afghan women to begin mobilizing groups and organizations themselves. Many of the women who remained formed groups in secret to meet some of the needs that the Taliban were denying such as education and health care. Additionally, women formed

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[174] Christopher Blanchard, "Al Qaeda: Statements and Evolving Ideology" (Congressional Research Service Report for Congress) 26 January 2006, 3.

[175] Mansfield, Laura, *His Own Words: The Writings of Dr. Ayman Zawahiri* (TLG Publications) 2006, 348.

cooperatives as a means of meeting strict Taliban dress codes and mobility restrictions through the sharing of clothes since the required burqa was often too expensive for every woman to have one.[176]

> The covert home schools for girls during the Taliban period, and the refugee support projects organized and run by educated Afghan women exiled in Pakistan, have served as training grounds for the women activists now designing and managing new programs in and out of government.[177]

One of these groups is RAWA, the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, formed in 1997 as a means of continuing education for girls and some health care.[178] Internal to the country, groups such as RAWA remained covert to avoid punishment by the Taliban, but outside of the country, they lobbied Western nations heavily framing their argument as "Gender Apartheid," working to raise awareness of what was occurring to women inside of Afghanistan at the hands of the Taliban. The image of an Afghan women gazing from behind a veil became a powerful image in the West.

Other groups that were very active during the Taliban period were the Afghan Women's Council, the Afghan Women Social and Cultural Organization, the Afghan Women Welfare Development, the Afghan Women's Education Center, the Afghan Women's Network, and the Women's Association for Peace and Human Rights in Afghanistan (WAPHA). Most of these groups were formed to assist women in refugee camps providing healthcare, counseling, education, and job training.

> Afghan civil society and community-based activists are working hard to begin reconstructing their society in refugee camps, in preparation for the day when they can reclaim and rebuild their own country. Women have played an important role in these efforts, both in refugee settlements and—clandestinely—in communities in

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[176] DOS Report, 17 November 2001.

[177] Margaret A. Mills and Sally L. Kitch, "Afghan Women Leaders Speak," *NWSA Journal,* Vol. 18, No. 3 (Fall 2006), 196.

[178] Judith Lorber, "Heroes, Warriors and Burqas: A Feminist Sociologist's Reflections on September 11," *Sociological Forum,* Vol. 17, No. 3 (September 2002), 390.

> Afghanistan. These women and men says, Sima Wali, an Afghan women who directs the non-profit organization Refugee Women in Development, 'have already demonstrated remarkable leadership and ability. They are our hope for Afghanistan.[179]

The international feminist group Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) also issued numerous reports on the plight of women in Afghanistan.

> The transnational feminist campaign in support of women's rights in Afghanistan succeeded in preventing all but three countries from extending diplomatic recognition to the Taliban regime (Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates)…All this pointed to the emergence of a new international environment, including the influence of global feminism.[180]

6. Post Taliban Period and Women's Groups

Following the U.S. led invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent defeat of the Taliban in 2001, these women's organizations continued their work with and on behalf of Afghan women, but now were able to work inside Afghanistan. New organizations were also created, such as the New Afghanistan Women Association (NAWA), whose primary stated mission is education; the Training Human Rights Association for Afghanistan, which strives to teach women handicrafts and promotes women's rights; and the World Organization for Mutual Afghan Network, primarily focused on teaching widows to read. Almost all of these women's organizations are based in Kabul due to continued security risks and continued instability in parts of the country.

These women's groups were limited, however, in their ability to mobilize resources internally to any significant level due to continued security problems which continue to be a major threat.

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[179] DOS Report, 17 November 2001.

[180] Valentine Moghadam, *Modernizing Women* (London, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.) 2003, 267.

> While the de jur discrimination imposed by the Taliban has ended in many places, life for too many women and girls in Afghanistan remains subject to de facto restrictions. "We couldn't go out during the Taliban," another woman in rural Paghman said. "Now we are free and we can go out but we don't."[181]

The current state of women's rights is similar to that of earlier improvements; only in the Kabul area and other urbanized pockets is there any real improvement. Much of the rural areas remain unchanged due to the continued threat of violence as well as the strict adherence to Pashtunwali tribal codes.

"Attacks against non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and their staff by armed groups have resulted in humanitarian agencies scaling back their projects or operating in fewer districts, most notably in the south."[182] This in particular has had an effect on women's organizations attempt to work in areas other than Kabul. 2006 may well be the most violent year since the 2001 invasion.

In addition, the limited number of educated women in the country has had a measurable effect on the numbers of women involved. This has also dictated the focus of many of the international women's organizations efforts. Most of the work is at the basic subsistence level programs and at education programs to expand girl's access to education. Education programs have expanded with approximately 1.73 million girls attending school in grades 1–6, as reported by the Afghan Ministry of Education in December 2006, which is 500% increase from December 2001.[183] But, security continues to be a concern as the Taliban continue to threaten women and girls education through threats and violence.

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[181] Zama Coursen-Neff, "Afghan Women and Girls Still Held Hostage," Middle East Report, No. 228 (Autumn 2003), 9.

[182] Amnesty International Report, "Afghanistan: All Who Are Not Friends Are Enemies: Taliban Abuses Against Civilians" (April 2007), 12.

[183] Ibid., 17.

The UN reported in 2006 that 359 schools had been closed due to intimidation of teachers, students, and parents; an additional 183 schools were burnt in arson attacks.[184]

Another issue was that change was not mandated and enforced quickly enough and that the women that were prepared to take leadership roles on behalf of women were discouraged or were unable to because of the lack of progress and security concerns. Some Afghan women viewed this as a broken promise. Colin Powell, then Secretary of State, declared in November 2001 "the recovery of Afghanistan must entail a restoration of the rights of Afghan women…"[185] But this contrasted sharply with the reality of a post Taliban Afghanistan.

> Although the Interim Administration has publicly endorsed the right of women to obtain an education and employment, the lack of an official repeal of Taliban edicts by the Justice ministry is a significant concern for many women Human Rights Watch interviewed.[186]

A recent report from RAND, Center for Middle East Public Policy, has found in a study on post-conflict development in Afghanistan that "the inclusion of women earlier in the process brings more security, not less" and including women as a part of reconstruction activities improves the outcome of post-conflict nation-building.[187]

The liberal feminist agenda has had more success at the national level, but again, little progress has been made in the more rural areas of Afghanistan.

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[184] UN Press Release, "Special Rapporteur On Right to Education Appeals To Anti-Government Groups to Stop Attacks on Schools in Afghanistan" (9 August 2006); Available online at [Website] http://www.unhchr.ch/huricane.nsf/view01/20440808F17EFE70C12571C500242B99?opendocument; accessed 1 November 2007.

[185] Coursen-Neff, 9.

[186] Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper, May 2002, 2.

[187] RAND, Center for Middle East Public Policy, "Women and Human Security; The Case of Post Conflict Afghanistan," by Dr. Cheryl Benard, Kristen Cordell, and Olga Oliker; available online at www.rand.org; accessed 22 November 2007.

In 2004, the constitution was ratified. It attempted to balance traditional Islamic values with individual rights. International women's rights groups and Afghan women's groups heavily lobbied this process.

> Women had become legally free to work and study after being forcibly home-bound under the Taliban, and had been guaranteed a role in public life through seat quotas in the national and provincial legislatures.[188]

Today, women are involved in the legislative process and are at work promoting a reformist agenda. Women activists such as Malalai Joya, a representative elected in 2005 to parliament, has been so vocal about the issue of women's rights that the Afghan parliament voted to suspend Joya from her seat on the grounds of criticizing other members of Parliament.

Islamic feminist are working towards a better understanding of the issue of seclusion and veiling in regards to Islam and tribal customs but, again, success has only been seen in urban areas while the rural tribal areas are still mainly influenced by Pashtun tribal customs. The lack of access and the continuing violence, as well as the high illiteracy rate, has made the Islamic feminist approach ineffective in Afghanistan.

At the local level, women and women's organizations or NGOs are involved, but to a much lower degree. One of the main issues is that the women who are filling the mandated positions on the local village *shuras* are just puppets of their husbands or other influential men on the council and are not representing women or women's rights.[189] Education, tribal customs, and the threat of violence are cited as the reasons for women's inability to assert their views independently. Afghanistan has also ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women treaty. The continuing issue remains that at the national level, Afghan laws may guarantee a

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[188] Pamela Constable, "A Wake-Up Call in Afghanistan," *Journal of Democracy,* Vol. 18, No. 2 (April 2007) 87.

[189] Mills and Kitch, 194.

woman's rights but at the local level and at the personal level, these laws have had little effect in improving women's rights. It is at the local level that the women's movement will have to make changes to see these laws actually put into practice.

7. Afghanistan Analysis

The Women's movement in Afghanistan faces numerous challenges, namely security and entrenched tribal customs being two of the strongest issues that women face in Afghanistan. Afghan civil society was also extremely damaged due to decades of fighting. It is the rebuilding of Afghanistan's civil society that must be the initial focus and women must be a part of the process to ensure their place in the future of Afghanistan.

Security is the next major issue. Security must come as the result of the development of an effective government that can enforce the laws in a just manner throughout the country. U.S. and NATO forces continue to fight the resurgent Taliban in the south and along the Pakistan border region as well as training the Afghan Army and Police. "Improving Afghan women's physical security is critical. 'When women are afraid to go out in the street, they can't take advantage of the theoretical freedoms that are now available to them.'"[190]

Both Liberal feminists and Islamic feminists are working to improve women's rights. Liberal feminist are working at the national level to insure that the laws guarantee the individual rights of women. Areas of concern continue to be family law such as divorce, marriage, and child custody. Islamic feminist groups are working on these same issues by expanding on the strict interpretation of Quranic passages by presenting alternative interpretations that are less restrictive to women and more clearly define what is Islamic and what is tribal. However, both of these efforts are severely restricted due to security, illiteracy, and Pashtun tribal dominance.

[190] Coursen-Neff, 11.

Education efforts on behalf of girls are critical in developing women who are capable of being an active part of Afghan society. This must include a continued focus on developing primary school education and expanding education beyond primary school for girls. This is an area that NGOs and the United States can assist by continuing the development of schools, training teachers, and by providing scholarships for continuing education for deserving Afghan women. Some areas of study should include education, law, religion and theology, economics and finance, political science, and other areas of study that would continue to develop Afghan women in order to take leadership positions within their country and to assist in the development of Afghan society.

Afghanistan demonstrates that women and women's groups mobilized to face the extreme repression of the Taliban and were able to maintain organizations that have helped in rebuilding Afghanistan after the removal of the Taliban. Women and women's organizations will continue to play an important role in equipping women to be a part of Afghan society.

E. CASE STUDIES CONCLUSION

The role of women is of critical importance in the fight against radical Islamist ideology as examined in these three case studies. The Islamist's interpretation of an Islamic state would most likely be extremely repressive as seen in Iran and Afghanistan. Algeria, Afghanistan, and Iran witnessed a century of improvements to the rights of women that were reversed in a short period of time. The Taliban regime is a model of the impact of Islamism. Iran, though not as extreme, is a model of what Islamic fundamentalist ideology might look like if it were to come to fruition elsewhere. The real significance of these cases is the continued resistance of the women of Algeria, Afghanistan, and Iran to Islamist policies, laws, and ideology. Women mobilized groups and organizations to challenge Islamist ideology in an effort to maintain or regain their rights. This is not just the construct of outsiders or westerners, but of Muslim women

themselves and the struggle for their rights inside of those societies. It is this struggle, at the political, societal, and personal level, that has application in the fight against Islamist ideology and the war of ideas.

V. CONCLUSION

A. SUMMATION

This thesis has examined Muslim women and women's groups to determine if they could be a critical vulnerability in Islamist ideology and an asset to the United States in the Global War on Terror. The case studies of Iran, Algeria, and Afghanistan have demonstrated that women have mobilized as a result of broken promises by Islamists and their repressive policies. Women have challenged Islamism using different approaches and have had some measurable results in reversing gains made by the Islamists. Women's groups' efforts have improved women's overall place in their respective societies, but much work remains.

Women and women's organizations are an important ally in the war of ideas in resisting the influence and spread of Islamism. Islamism by its very nature and definition seeks to limit the rights and roles that women can play in a Muslim society. Under Islamists, women are viewed in a symbolic manner and are secluded from others via veiling, seclusion, and other limits that prevent women from entering the public sphere. Women in Iran, Algeria, and Afghanistan have mobilized against these policies. The plight of women in these countries and their struggle to regain their rights may be useful in understanding what would happen if current Jihadist organizations such as al Qaeda, Hezbollah, Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria, or the Taliban (in Afghanistan again) were successful in the creation of their vision of an Islamic States. For this very reason, the United States should endeavor to engage and work with women and women's organizations to strengthen this natural resistance to the repressive ideology of Islamism.

Feminism, specifically Liberal and Islamic feminism, seek to broaden Islamism's restrictive understanding of women's roles in society. Islamic feminism attempts to strip away centuries of male dominated interpretations and

overly patriarchal cultural practices, and to read Quran and Hadith in a more progressive historical and linguistic fashion. From this broader understanding comes a new understanding of the women in Muslim cultures and how Muslim women can be an active part of civil society. Liberal feminism builds on this understanding and seeks to amend, repeal, or write new laws that guarantee the rights and equality of women. These ideas and methods directly confront Islamism by offering a competing view of women in Islam and by exposing the broken promises and brutality committed by the Islamists in regard to women.

Iran, Algeria, and Afghanistan provide three different models of how women and women's groups have mobilized and the actions they have taken when threatened by Islamism. In Iran, women and women's groups have been a dynamic force in resisting the policies of the Iranian regime and working towards a broader understanding through Islamic fundamentalism. These women's groups waged a public information campaign focusing on the broken promises of the Khomeini regime to inform the Iranian public of the impact that the regimes' legislation and policies were having on women. This created a groundswell of discontent and created pressure on the government that was forced to repeal or amend several policies that were directly having a negative affect on women. By insisting that they maintain their place in the public sphere, women have been able to create a gradual change of perceptions that women are a part of society, as shown in Iran, and women have been able to regain many of the jobs and positions that the Khomeini regime declared as un-Islamic. Iranian women's organizations have been fighting to regain women's freedoms and rights for 28 years and have had some success such as the amendment to the Family Laws, the reinstatement of women judges, and child custody, but the Islamists policies of the Iranian regime have limited women's ability to enter the public sphere and have reacted violently when challenged.

Algeria provides another example of women mobilizing to challenge the Islamist ideology. Women's groups in Algeria focused on the broken promises made during the war for independence and formed numerous organizations to

challenge the loss of women's rights due to the Islamist passing of the Family Code. These women's organizations were also valuable in resisting the violence of Islamist groups such as the GIA during the Algerian Civil War. Women continued to fight for a repeal of the Family Code and were successful with the parliament voting to amend the law improving women's place in Algerian society. This also signaled a reduction in the influence the Islamists had, in which women's groups played a significant role by informing the public of the violence the Islamists committed against women. Women's activist groups in Algeria are further proof that women are a vital part in resisting Islamism.

Afghanistan is a poignant example of the repressive nature of Islamism. Even under these circumstances women organized groups in an effort to hold onto the most basic of rights. The work done by women's organizations outside of Afghanistan was also important in raising worldwide awareness of what was occurring in Afghanistan. Since the fall of the Taliban, women's place in Afghan society has improved with the passing of a constitution that guarantees their rights, but much work remains. Women's groups in Afghanistan are still limited in their efforts due to security problems, women's limited education and literacy, and Pashtun tribal customs. However, women are active in working for change in many ways. Education, raising security issues, and working for a better understanding between Islam and culture has helped to improve women's situations in Afghanistan. The United States can further its own battle against Islamism by working with women's groups such as the ones in Iran, Algeria, and Afghanistan, thus opening another front in the war of ideas against Islamism by working indirectly in support of these organizations and openly via foreign policy.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

Women and women's organizations can be vital allies in the war of ideas against Islamism. The United States must develop a program of engagement and support to assist women and women's organizations that are living under Islamist rule or those who are threatened by its ideology in the broader Muslim

world. There are two primary means that the U.S. can assist these women's organizations and multiple supporting methods: direct engagement and indirect engagement.

The U.S. Government should give priority to working with these groups through indirect methods for numerous reasons. To reach women in Muslim countries, the U.S. must work with other organizations such as NGOs, and in particular, NGOs focused on women's issues. By supporting NGOs, the United States can gain access to places where NGOs are already at work and can expand the impact these organizations could have. There are three problems that must be addressed when working with organizations outside of the U.S. government. First, the organization may have other programs or policies that are not in keeping with U.S. interests or values. The U.S. must thoroughly understand the mission, objectives and underlying ideology of any group that the U.S. may work with. This is important in preventing an act or a belief from being transmitted by extension back to the U.S., which may be harmful or counter to U.S. policy objectives and values.

Second and more significant is that by working with the U.S., a group's credibility could be jeopardized, or as some analysts have commented, be given the kiss of death — a complete loss of credibility because of their collusion with the U.S.. In recent years, many Muslims are under the belief that the U.S. is hostile to Islam and trying to use women as a cultural invasion. The U.S. must avoid this perception and attempt to limit its impact on groups who partner with the U.S. in order to work with Muslim women and be effective. Furthermore, many NGOs are openly hostile to the U.S. and will not work with the U.S., no matter what the issue. This is particularly true with women's organizations that have a negative view of the United States' foreign policies.

These problems leave little room for the United States to openly conduct a strategy of engagement with women and women's organizations. This leaves the U.S. the option of working indirectly with these groups. Due to the open hostility of some NGOs and the potential harm to either the U.S.'s image or the

organizations image, the U.S. should work in an indirect or un-attributable manner. These programs would not be run by U.S. agencies and would not have the U.S. brand anywhere on them. This entails the U.S. working through willing partners who are then is able to transfer those assets to NGOs and other organizations that are working to address the woman question in the Muslim world. This does not mean keeping it secret, but does infer that the U.S. is not directly conducting the program. Some of these partners could be other countries who share a similar view and have similar policies to the U.S. but have a better relationship with a particular country. Others could be existing international aid organizations, or regional, national, and local organizations that are on good terms with the United Sates and share a common vision in wanting to assist women in the Muslim world. These organizations then could develop and run programs such as education (to include scholarship programs), legal assistance, job training, humanitarian crisis, and many more.

Some of the principal areas where work is already being conducted by women-focused NGOs include women's education, legal assistance and representation, and financial programs such as micro loans, job and skill training, medical assistance, and many more. With the U.S. helping to support these efforts in an indirect manner, these organizations would then be better able to conduct broader initiatives and be able to implement longer-term programs. In addition to just funding, the U.S. could provide training to others who would then be able to offer training to these NGOs. Some areas that may be applicable include legal representation or just raising the awareness of women's legal rights. This could be done using many different formats such as newspaper articles and radio shows, or even television shows that are either informative or entertaining depicting real scenarios in a manner that raises awareness of women's rights and some strategies they could implement themselves. One serious drawback to working through other organizations is the ability to control or guide the efforts. Additionally, corruption is another problem that the U.S. must guard against when working with external agencies.

As a supporting effort, the United Sates should also attempt to work directly with women and women's organizations in the Muslim world. This relationship could be built on the mutual understanding of the threat that Islamism poses. This shared understanding is the basis of cooperation. The United States' engagement with women should occur at the international, regional, national, and local levels, ensuring that policies and messages are synchronized across every level to prevent misunderstandings or contradictions. This maximizes the impact and ensures that the message is delivered to a larger audience in a consistent manner. By working through each of these levels, the U.S. also takes advantage of the mutual assistance that these groups lend to each other — from international organizations down to the local women's group.

The Department of State and USAID are currently running numerous programs designed to assist women in the Muslim world and elsewhere. Some of the larger aid programs that contain specific elements for women include humanitarian assistance, health, and education. Other smaller programs include opportunities for women in agriculture and other rural environments as well as other income-producing skills that are culturally appropriate. Afghanistan, for example, received the third highest amount of U.S. foreign aid in 2006, and both USAID and the DOS are running numerous programs, many of which are specifically designed to assist women.[191] But the State Department and USAID are limited in their ability to work with other organizations that are hostile to the U.S., or are at least hesitant due to poor perceptions of the U.S.. USAID and the DOS are equally limited in their ability to work in countries that are hostile to the U.S., such as Iran. This leaves indirect engagement as the primary method of assisting the women's movement that is already challenging the Islamists in a battle for women's rights and place in the Muslim world.

One of the United States most powerful weapons to use for direct engagement is through diplomatic pressure. The U.S. can apply diplomatic

[191] Rhoda Margesson, "U.S. Assistance to Women in Afghanistan and Iraq: Challenges and Issues for Congress," Congressional Research Service Library of Congress (5 January 2006) 5.

pressure, both negatively and positively, to other nations. Some strategies include limiting agreements, such as trade agreements, with nations that have poor women's rights or on the positive side, entering into treaties or agreements that espouse a more favorable policy towards women. For this to have a greater effect, the U.S. should also use its access with the international media to influence the Muslim world. A public information campaign that encourages fair treatment of women in Muslim countries and informs the public of this advantage can gradually improve the perception of women in those countries.

An information campaign should consist of exposing Islamist policies and actions to a larger audience; this includes translating them and disseminating them to as large a media audience as possible, using print, radio, television, and online sources to maximize the distribution. Additionally, referring these issues to people who are experts on the issue or hold positions of influence can help to illicit culturally appropriate interpretations. Opening the expert's comments or declarations up for debate can also help to broaden the impact and the understanding of the issue. Working to keep relevant stories and issues, as they relate to Islamist policies and women, in the greater public sphere as well as in the country or region of interest will work to apply constant scrutiny to the Islamists. The world, and especially the Muslim world, viewing their actions through a microscope would increase pressure on the Islamists to reform their policies and behavior. This is especially true when Islamic scholars conduct this debate. This is a means of amplifying the moderate voices inside Islam. An information campaign could help to apply pressure directly to the country in question or, indirectly, by informing its otherwise uninformed populace.

Women and women's organizations are powerful allies for the United States in the war of ideas against Islamism. They are allies who have been directly challenging the Islamists, and have won some battles, but the issue is far from resolved. These women and women's groups are promoting a competing view of Islam from within the Islamist's own strongholds and have made progress in regaining some of their rights and their place in their societies. The United

States is in a position to help both indirectly and directly with the careful application of soft power to assist these women in challenging the broken promises of the Islamists.

This thesis demonstrated that women and women's groups in the Muslim world could be strong allies in reducing the influence and spread of Islamist ideologies. Women and women's organizations have proven that they are effective in resisting the impact of Islamism and have been able to roll back some of its repressive policies. Women and women's organizations or feminist groups are active in the Muslim world already and are a growing voice in the region. Therefore, it is of vital interest to the United States government to engage these groups and women's interests as a means of challenging the spread of Islamist ideology and enlisting them in the war of ideas.

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